

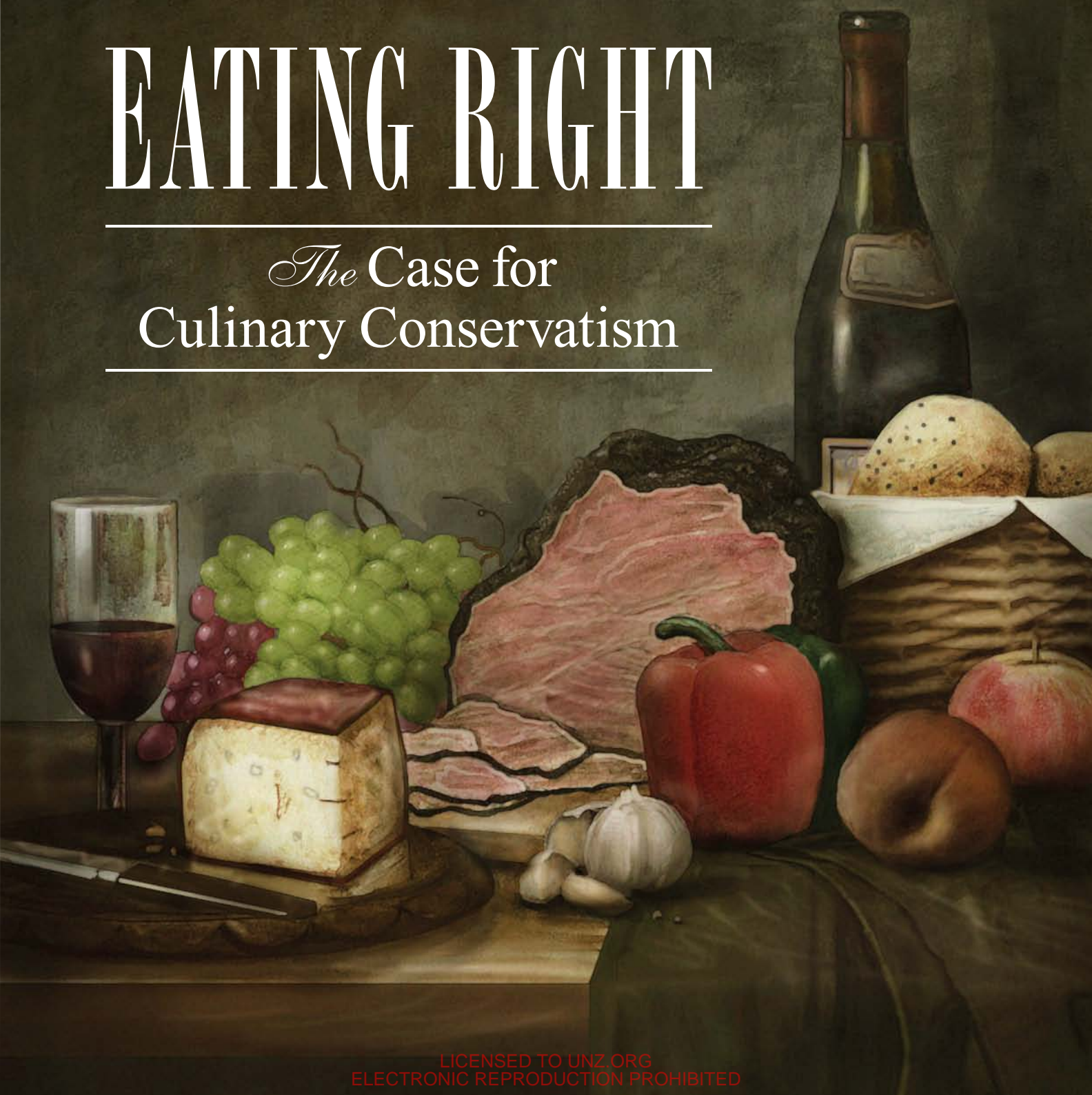
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JUNE 30, 2008

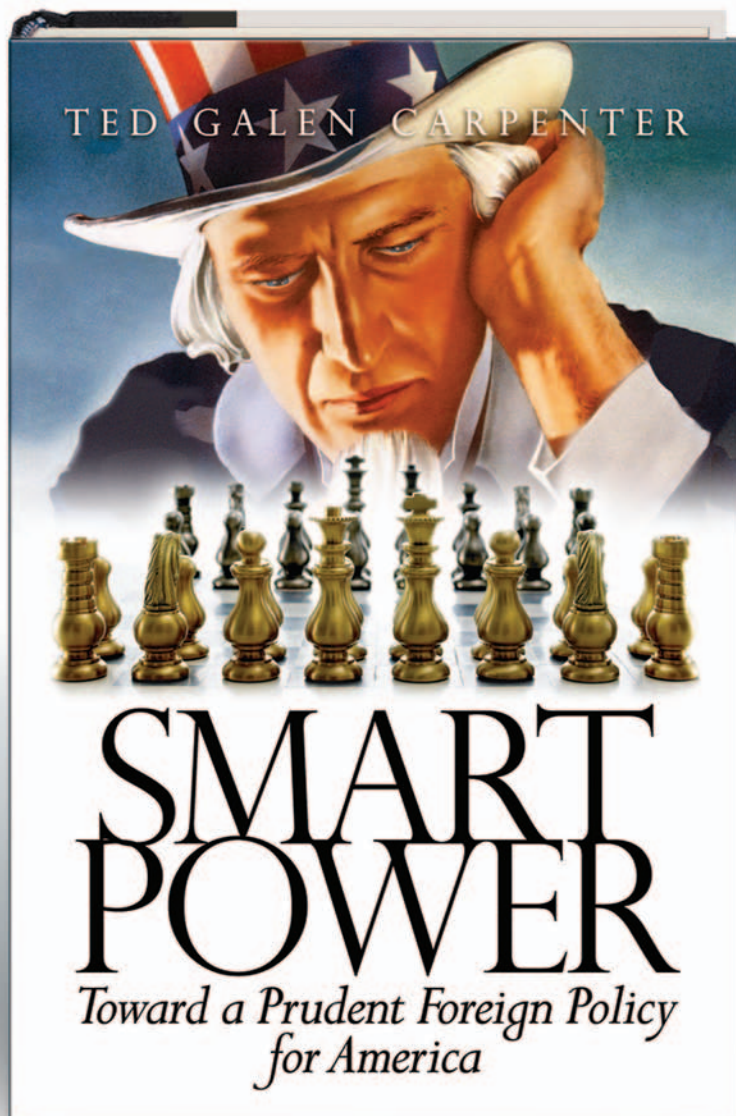
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ZUNIQUE

[IDEAS]

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SUNKEN TREASURE

The headlines are heartbreaking: 38,000 Iowans displaced, their homes and fields submerged beneath a brew of sewage, fuel, farm chemicals, and dead animals. Millions of mosquitoes hover over the toxic swamp. More rain is forecast, and another 20 levees threaten to give way. But these people are not broken.

This isn't yet a Katrina-scale disaster, in large part because flinty heartlanders refuse to let it be. In New Orleans, residents huddled on rooftops, waiting for help that didn't come soon enough. Three years later, the Lower Ninth Ward has yet to recover.

But along the Mississippi, Midwesterners fought back. Men and boys worked round the clock to save their drowning towns. Brian Wiekand of Oakville, Iowa stacked sandbags at his local levee until water lapped over the top, then resolved not to be ruined by the crisis. "The Bible says the prayer of one man, God hears," he told the Associated Press. "Here's my prayer: I ask for the strength of God to fight this flood, and I ask for the grace to accept whatever happens."

He and his neighbors will get emergency assistance—lots of it. Chastened by his delayed response to Katrina, President Bush was quick to offer aid. But no federal initiative is a substitute for local action, and here we see a resilient population bearing up under dismal conditions. Before the water began to recede, they were pushing to get back into their homes to begin reconstruction.

They've survived worse: the 1993 flood caused 48 deaths and \$21 billion in damage. And Iowans got back up, dried out, and replanted. They will again.

[EUROPE]

THE PLUCK OF THE IRISH

"The European Union is in crisis," trumpeted a British newspaper after Ireland voted to reject the Lisbon Treaty, which



FREDRICK DELIGNE WWW.CAGLECARTOONS.COM

would have moved Europe closer to full integration. The Paddies had beaten the politicians. The treaty was "finished."

But the euphoria only lasted until someone remembered that the EU doesn't accept defeat. In 2001, after all, the Irish had refused the Nice Treaty, only to approve an amended version a year later. And two years ago, when the French and the Dutch threw out the Lisbon Treaty, EU officials simply set about revising the wording—not the substance—of the proposed constitution.

France's President Sarkozy pressured the Euroskeptics to reconsider, and Ireland's prime minister, Brian Cowen, attacked "misguided" right-wing groups for celebrating his people's verdict. At a summit in Brussels, EU representatives made statements about "respecting" Ireland's decision, but plans are already being made for another referendum next year, before the important European elections in June. In the United States of Europe, no does not mean no.

[CULTURE]

CHARITIES REFUSE TO GIVE

California's recognition of same-sex marriages went into effect June 17, and the newswires quickly filled with images of happy couples exchanging rings,

being showered with rice, and blushing. But the celebrations cannot conceal the legal difficulties that lie ahead for religious groups that do not recognize these unions.

Confronted with a choice between Church teaching and Massachusetts state law, which also recognizes same-sex marriages, Catholic Charities, an organization that only places children with heterosexual couples, had to close its adoption agencies in the state. In New Jersey, a Methodist ministry that rented out facilities for wedding receptions lost its tax-exempt status for refusing to make the space available for same-sex commitment ceremonies.

Legal recognition of gay unions comes at a steep price for Christian institutions, which have now lost a degree of freedom. If states do not provide religious exemptions to these laws, same-sex marriage will begin pushing faith-based organizations out of the public square. This means the loss not only of a few reception halls and adoption agencies, but many religiously-affiliated hospitals and schools.

In a nation so committed to allowing its citizens to define their own lives, a little tolerance ought also to be extended to these long established and socially vital institutions.

[JUSTICE]

HARD CASES

While the California Supreme Court imposed same-sex marriage on the Golden State, so far this season the U.S. Supreme Court has not had to confront contentious social issues. That's not to say recent decisions—including *Boumediene* and *Dada*—have not showcased how divided the high court remains. These two rulings, the most notable so far this year (as of press time), both split the court 5-4, with Roberts, Alito, Scalia, and Thomas dissenting from the liberal majority on each occasion.

These rulings have done more than illustrate the court's philosophical division, however. They also remind us that there is plenty of room for thoughtful conservatives to question the wisdom of the dissenting justices, and that the court's liberals are not always radical. John McCain disagrees: he called *Boumediene*, which extends basic *habeas corpus* protections to detained "enemy combatants," "one of the worst decisions in the history of the country." But George Will—who challenged the Republican nominee's assertion by reminding readers of *Dred Scott*, *Plessy*, and *Korematsu*—offered a balanced take in his June 17 column. "The Supreme Court's ruling only begins marking a boundary against government's otherwise boundless power to detain people indefinitely," he wrote, while acknowledging that "the question of the detainees' rights is a matter about which intelligent people of good will can differ."

The same can be said about *Dada*, which expanded the rights of immigrants who overstay their visas. We aren't in favor of that, but *Dada*'s extensions are minor and procedural, allowing aliens to withdraw from "voluntary departure" agreements and appeal their removal from the country. (They could already appeal if they did

not agree to "voluntary departure.") Roughly speaking, this is like allowing a defendant to withdraw a guilty plea. It's a bad idea—aliens who overstay their visits already receive lenient treatment—but not one of the worst decisions in the history of the country, even by our standards.

[LEGACY]

BUSH COURTS HISTORIANS

In Rome this month, President Bush told an interviewer that he intends to write a book on his legacy. "It takes a while for history to have its, you know, to be able to have enough time to look back to see why decisions were made and what their consequences were," he said. Clearly, Dubya the memoirist will need some professional help.

Two days later, in London, Bush had dinner with a group of well-known British historians, including Simon Schama, Niall Ferguson, and Andrew Roberts. The event prompted speculation that the president was auditioning ghostwriters. Schama seems an unlikely pick, having recently described Bush's presidency as "an absolute f----- catastrophe." Roberts, however, is far more amenable to the president's vision of himself. Indeed, he has already cast Bush as the Churchill of his day. In his *History of the English Speaking Peoples*, Roberts vigorously defended the Iraq War, Guantanamo Bay, and the Freedom Agenda. Last year, Roberts had lunch at the White House with the president, vice president, and other eminent hawks such as Norman Podhoretz and Gertrude Himmelfarb. The historian was given a pair of presidential cufflinks, which he tactfully wore to the London soirée.

Slate editor Jacob Weisberg recently called Roberts "the fawning court historian of the Bush administration." The description may prove more exact than he realized. ■

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Food for Thought

Renewing the culinary culture should be a conservative cause.

By John Schwenkler

ALICE WATERS might not seem like a conservative. A veteran of Berkeley's Free Speech Movement, who once cooked a \$25,000-a-seat fundraising dinner for Bill Clinton, she eagerly compares her campaign for "edible schoolyards"—where children work with instructors to grow, prepare, and eat fresh produce—to John F. Kennedy's attempt to improve physical fitness through mandatory exercise. Her dream of organic, locally and sustainably produced food in every school cafeteria, class credit for lunch hour, and required gardening time and cooking classes is as utopian as they come. The name she has given her gastronomic movement, the "Delicious Revolution," strikes the ear as one part fuzzy-headed Marxism, the other Brooksonian bobo-speak. This woman is not, as they say, one of us.

But a closer look tells a different story. In a 1997 talk, Waters quoted from an essay by Francine du Plessix Grey about the film "Kids," which portrays the sex-, drug-, and violence-crazed lives of a circle of New York teenagers. Du Plessix Grey writes of being haunted by the adolescents' "feral" and "boorishly gulped" fast-food diet: "we may," she suggests, "be witnessing the first generation in history that has not been required to participate in that primal rite of socialization, the family meal." Such an activity "is not only the core curriculum in the school of civilizing discourse; it is also a set of protocols that curb our natural savagery and our animal greed, and cultivate a capacity for sharing and thoughtfulness." These teenagers "are

deprived of the main course of civilized life—the practice of sitting down at the dinner table and observing the attendant conventions."

Today's children, Waters goes on to say, "are bombarded with a pop culture which teaches redemption through buying things." But schoolyard gardens, like the one she helped create at the middle school a few blocks from my home in Berkeley, "turn pop culture upside-down: they teach redemption through a deep appreciation for the real, the authentic, and the lasting—for the things that money can't buy: the very things that matter most of all if we are going to lead sane, healthy, and sustainable lives. Kids who learn environmental and nutritional lessons through school gardening—and school cooking and eating—learn ethics." Good cooking, she writes in the introduction to her 2007 cookbook, *The Art of Simple Food*, "can reconnect our families and communities with the most basic human values, provide the deepest delight for all our senses, and assure our well-being for a lifetime."

The proposal, put slightly differently, is that our attitudes toward food—which nourishes and sustains us, which binds us most fundamentally to place, family, market, and community—provide a measure of our respect for what Russell Kirk called the "Permanent Things." We are not just what we eat but how we eat. The cultivation and consumption of our meals are activities as distinctively human as walking, talking, loving, and praying. Learning to regard

the meal not merely as something that fills our bellies and helps us grow, but as the consummate exercise of beings carnal and earthbound yet upwardly and outwardly drawn, is a crucial step in the restoration of culture. The suggestion that the inculcation of such values might be an essential part of an adequate education ought to resonate beyond the confines of the doctrinaire Left.

Adopting an alternative view of food does not require rejecting the possibility of a free and prosperous market economy. Indeed, the rise of the New American Diet—meals eaten in a rush and very often alone, made from processed and prepackaged ingredients—was not solely or even primarily the product of Adam Smith's invisible hand. Historian Harvey Levenstein has argued that the spate of government regulations in the wake of early 20th-century food-safety scares played a crucial role in the rise of industrialized agriculture and centralized food processors. Early nutritionists and home economists, many distinctly of the quack variety, found a key ally in their attempts to reform American cuisine in Herbert Hoover's Food Administration. The goal of reducing consumption of scarce foods and eating in accordance with "scientific" principles was tied to the cause of Allied victory in the First World War.

Official dietary guidelines inevitably became the product of collaboration between government agencies and representatives of the industries that stand to benefit. The substitution of state-

sponsored nutritionist technocracy for the collective wisdom of taste, instinct, common sense, and tradition is a perfect example of the triumph of Tocqueville's feared "immense tutelary power" ("absolute, detailed, regular, far-seeing, and mild"). The same goes for the extraordinary industrialization and global "flattening" of our culinary economy, which Waters's focus on community gardening, seasonal eating, and local markets is meant to combat.

Heavily concentrated industries demand expansive and centralized government. The converse is also true: bigger businesses are easier to regulate than smaller ones, and economies of scale are good for economic growth. "Get big or get out," Dwight Eisenhower's secretary of agriculture told American farmers—a directive updated to "bigger" by Earl Butz, the infamous Nixon agriculture secretary who instructed farmers to abandon crop rotation and plant "from fencerow to fencerow."

Price controls and multibillion-dollar farm subsidies prop up corporate agribusiness and discourage smaller producers from trying to find alternative market niches. Real local autonomy—setting regulatory standards that do not conform to national or international ones, restriction or taxation of imports or exports, and preservation of place-specific forms of agriculture and animal husbandry—is undermined because it makes for economic inefficiency. The natural capacities of location, season, and culture to link people together and shape the ways they farm and eat are countered by artificial measures designed to maximize yield.

But it is exactly these social and cultural dimensions of our culinary economy—the centralization of processing and production into an ever shrinking number of multinational corporations, the incredible distances over which

food travels before it reaches our tables (an average of 1,500 miles in the United States), the loss of idiosyncratic foods and food cultures, and so on—that should raise the greatest concerns for traditional conservatives. "Eating is an agricultural act," writes Wendell Berry. But Slow Food International founder Carlo Petrini argues that it is also a political one—a deed no less significant than the ways we cast our votes. Hence even the smallest acts of resistance to the hegemony of the present system, where corporate representatives and industry-funded scientists at public universities collaborate with government officials on regulatory policies and nutritional guidelines, are crucial steps in recovering local culture and reconstituting our "little platoons." This will nurture the ability to govern—or resist being governed.

MANY OF OUR BEST FOOD WRITERS ARE IN FULL-THROATED REBELLION AGAINST THE CORPORATE-INDUSTRIAL-GOVERNMENTAL NUTRITION ESTABLISHMENT.

The seeds of change are already being sown. Many American cities are transforming blighted urban districts with neighborhood farms that raise food not just for consumption by those who grow it but for sale in local markets. In 2007, a group of teenagers at a community farm in Brooklyn brought in \$25,000, and a nonprofit organization that runs a one-acre plot in Milwaukee grossed over \$220,000 in local sales.

The website LocalHarvest.org lists over 3,600 farmers markets in the U.S., and the number of Community Supported Agriculture programs, in which supporters pay a set fee in exchange for regular shares of the produce from a local farm, grew from 50 nationwide to over 1,500 between 1990 and 2005. Such

efforts give growers and buyers the opportunity to relate to one another—one study showed that shoppers at farmers markets have 10 times as many conversations as those at supermarkets. These local ventures also provide families with fresh produce and allow farmers to diversify their crops and receive a far greater rate of return than when they deal with corporate middlemen.

Many of our best food writers are in full-throated rebellion against the corporate-industrial-governmental nutrition establishment. Michael Pollan's *In Defense of Food* deconstructs the pretensions of "food science" in often hilarious fashion and distills all you need to know about eating into three directives: *Eat food* (as opposed to things with unfamiliar or unpronounceable ingredients, packaged "food products" that make government-sanctioned health

claims, and pretty much anything from the middle aisles of the grocery store); *Not too much* (go for quality over quantity, and eat at a table, with others); *Mostly plants* (in unprocessed form when possible). Nina Planck's *Real Food* takes the traditionalist counterculture to the extreme by denouncing veganism and extolling the health benefits of everything from cheese, lard, butter, and raw milk to eggs, beef, chocolate, and wine. And Waters's wonderful new cookbook offers a step-by-step course in keeping a kitchen and preparing a range of dishes that, though simple, require time and effort to put together and are a joy to eat.

There are, of course, elements of leftism and elitism here. Pollan, for exam-

ple, has a puzzling line in which he condemns as “shameful” the fact that not all Americans “can afford to eat high-quality food.” It is sad, to be sure, and we should strive to remedy it, but life’s inevitabilities do not warrant our shame. And while Bill McKibben, in his brilliant communitarian manifesto, *Deep Economy*, takes care to insist that his program is not one that can be driven by top-down governance, Petrini very often rails against free markets, suggesting at one point in his *Slow Food Nation* that contemporary China’s “political homogeneity” and exploitation of labor and the environment are “the embodiment of perfect capitalism.” (The Chinese economic system, he says, is only “nominally communist.” One wonders what he made of the agricultural policies of the Soviet Union.) But that doesn’t alter the value of the Slow Food vision of a world of “gastronomes,” attentive to taste and cognizant of the sources of their food, and of thriving local markets driven by “economies of place.”

Proponents of a new way of eating are on shakier ground when they claim that a widespread turn toward small-scale and deindustrialized agriculture would not affect crop yields. McKibben proudly cites a study in which sustainable farming methods were found to lead, on average, to a near doubling of food production per hectare. He does not mention the many cases in which results have been less impressive. A much discussed study published in the journal *Science* in 2002 found that switching to organic farming reduced yields by 20 percent, though the possibility of lessening our reliance on petroleum may be worth the investment of some extra land. Reincorporating into the human food chain some of the millions of acres where corn and sorghum are now grown for ethanol production would also make a great difference.

But no reasonable person wants to remake the world or do away with modern agricultural technologies all together. The best solutions will come through honest, case-by-case engagement with the subtle demands of specific situations. As the UC Berkeley agroecologist Miguel Altieri puts it, a sound approach to agriculture “does not seek to formulate solutions that will be valid for everyone but encourages people to choose the technologies best suited to the requirements of each particular situation, without imposing them.” (That this could just as well be the summary of the ideal domestic or foreign policy ought to argue in its favor.) Respect for tradition and social and ecological responsibility can work together with technological innovation and capitalist resourcefulness to respect the ridges and valleys of regionalism in an increasingly flattened world.

Efforts to realize this vision ought to figure centrally in the projects of social and cultural renewal that traditional conservatives see as essential precedents to meaningful political reform. Neighborhood gardens, cooking classes in schools and church basements, and the promotion of local and co-operative markets are the kinds of projects that will build community; revitalize regional economies; encourage stable, healthy families; and instill the kinds of civic attitudes that make centralized government appear burdensome. These are not merely aesthetic or gustatory concerns, nor are they essentially private or familial ones: eating is part of our politics, too.

But things will have to take root in our kitchens first. It is here that Waters’s cookbook, which begins with the basics and consistently encourages the reader to modify recipes and vary ingredients with the seasons, provides as good an introduction as one could hope for. Each Friday, my wife and I walk with our 1-year-old son to a house down the

street where we pick up a box of just picked produce and pastured eggs from a nearby farm. Nigel Walker, who runs the farm and also has a stand at San Francisco’s Ferry Plaza Farmers Market, was involved in a nasty public spat with Carlo Petrini after an essay in *Slow Food Nation* called the prices at the Ferry Plaza Market “astronomical” and “boutique-y” and its clientele “extremely exclusive.” But at \$24.50, my family’s haul this week—lettuce, mixed leafy greens, arugula, potatoes, beets or summer squash, lemon verbena, cherries, peaches, carrots, strawberries, and chard—will cost us about \$8.50 less than similar (but non-organic, less fresh, and markedly lower-quality) produce from the local Safeway.

As with many CSA’s, our farm box comes with a newsletter that suggests recipes for some of its more exotic contents. But of late we’ve been making a point to turn to *The Art of Simple Food* whenever possible. So carrot soup, summer squash gratin with homegrown herbs, marinated beet salad, and wilted chard with onions are likely candidates for the days ahead. Obviously this is especially easy to pull off in the hometown of Alice Waters and Michael Pollan, the birthplace of Chez Panisse and California cuisine. It is, however, increasingly within the reach of anyone who wants to try.

Renewing the culinary culture, and restoring the kinds of values that are necessary for the proper functioning of a healthy republic, is not the sort of thing that can be left to activists, environmentalists, and government bureaucrats. This is a conservative cause if ever there was one, and it is going to have to begin at home. The revolution is coming. And it’s sure to be delicious. ■

John Schwenkler is a doctoral candidate in philosophy at the University of California, Berkeley.

Table Talk

Michael Pollan chats with Rod Dreher about how food culture can transcend the Left-Right divide.

Rod Dreher is the author of Crunchy Cons—the book and the Beliefnet blog—and an editorialist for the Dallas Morning News. On TAC’s behalf, he recently interviewed Michael Pollan, the best-selling author of The Ominivore’s Dilemma and In Defense of Food. Pollan’s work, like Dreher’s, is about more than just eating well—it’s also about the health of communities. Dreher’s “Birkenstocked Burkeans”—localist libertarians like organic farmer Joel Salatin and young conservatives of many stripes—have increasingly taken an interest in Pollan’s writing. So we brought together the original Crunchy Conservative and the defender of real food. Their conversation follows:

DREHER: What kind of conservatives do you find are interested in your work about food culture?

POLLAN: There is this Joel Salatin, evangelical Christian, libertarian right-wing, but there are not a whole lot of them. Frankly, it baffles me that this growing food movement doesn’t have more support on the Right. It’s very consistent with libertarianism, and it is very consistent with family values. Nevertheless, it is often portrayed in the media as a white-wine-sipping, arugula-chopping, liberal politic. Maybe you can answer for me why that is.

DREHER: It’s a point that I’ve struggled to figure out. I wrote about Salatin, too. He argues, as you do, that the state’s collusion with agribusiness has been disastrous...

POLLAN: For the last 40 years at least, our agricultural policy has been driven by an alliance of agribusiness interests and people in Congress. Farm policy has been organized around driving prices down, which is certainly not in the interest of farmers. It’s in the interest of people buying their products—Archer Daniels Midland, Cargill, McDonald’s, and Coca-Cola. They are the beneficiaries to the way we’ve organized our agriculture.

Some farmers see this; many don’t. We have this institution called the Farm Bureau, which is believed to represent farmers, but they do nothing of the kind. They tend to represent agribusiness. And the states, in their regulations, have tended to favor the biggest interests against the people trying to do smaller things like raw-milk operations.

The USDA is also very much organized around promoting the interest of the largest meat packers. Four of them control 82 percent of the market, and all the rules are designed for them. Now, I can understand it from their point of view: one inspector at a national beef plant can inspect 400 carcasses in an hour. If you send him to a small regional plant that is only doing four carcasses in a day, that looks like bad business. But in fact, that small plant is supporting farmers in the community and putting out higher quality meat.

So the deck is really stacked against family farmers and people trying to build local food economies. The federal regulatory regime is choking out some

really vital start-ups in an important corner of the American economy.

DREHER: In cultural terms, how has consumer capitalism as applied to food traditions worked to undermine the family and, by extension, the community?

POLLAN: Look at what food marketing does to the family dinner. The American food industry spends \$32 billion a year marketing 17,000 new products to us. They are trying very hard to undermine parents’ roles as gatekeepers of the family diet. You have kids clamoring for dinners—as described to me by marketers at General Mills—that consist essentially of serial microwaving. Every family member microwaves his own entree and then they kind of cross paths at the table for a little while.

Food marketers work very hard to get us to eat 24/7, and if you look at the images on television, you see families too hurried to cook a meal. They’re so busy that all they can do is grab a cereal bar on the way out the door. All of this emphasis on snack food has the effect of eroding the crucial institution of families sitting down together. One of the great blind spots in American conservatism is not appreciating the role of consumer capitalism in eroding values such as the family dinner.

DREHER: And communal values. You are talking about how food traditions are a social glue...

POLLAN: It's about sitting down and breaking bread among family or friends or even enemies—the rituals of eating together and cooking for people.

Reducing food to fuel or entertainment, which seems to be the goal of so much food marketing, takes away something important. Movements like Slow Food are fighting against this...

DREHER: I mention Slow Food in my work and find it ironic that it was started by an Italian Marxist...

POLLAN: Communist.

DREHER: Yeah. But it's very conservative.

POLLAN: It is. I always saw myself as being to the Left of center, although whenever I write about food or nature, I feel like I am actually to the Right. Somebody just sent me a blog post from the Tory Anarchist—you're mentioned in it, too—that says, "You might call it the Wendell Berry-Michael Pollan Right." I had not seen all those words strung together before, but it points to why this issue mixes up the usual categories—and it should.

I think that this movement will find trends on the Right. You see signs of it in Matthew Scully's work coming at animal welfare from the Right, which makes perfect sense as soon as you start reading it.

I think a lot of the problem is with the cultural signifiers, the fact that the movement's DNA comes out of the '60s. I wrote about this in *Omnivore's Dilemma*—the counterculture and its discovery of organic food—but you go back a few decades and organic food is very much a Tory issue in England.

DREHER: Well, among conservatives this discussion usually sparks an angry response, curiously enough based on class, this idea that to criticize the way

Americans eat or even to propose thinking critically about it is elitist. The most angry letters I've gotten about my work are from fellow conservatives who say, "You're just an elitist. You want to go to Whole Foods, and that's good for you, but don't criticize the way we eat."

POLLAN: I get it from the Left also—"you're promoting the kind of foods that average people can't afford." And the fact is, eating healthy, carefully grown food in this country does cost more. But I think the focus has to be less on that than why the other food is so cheap. The reason is that it's unfairly subsidized—from direct government subsidies in the form of crop subsidies to the kind of support of agribusiness that I was describing earlier to the fact that the companies growing this food are not required to pay the cost of the environmental damage they do. Did you know that if you've got a feedlot and you're polluting local streams, the government will pay you to clean up your mess? That seems deeply unfair to someone trying to do it right.

Obviously, all the public-health expense that goes with lousy food is also not borne by the people producing the food. If you could really internalize all the cost of that 99-cent double cheeseburger at McDonald's, you would be astounded at what an elitist food it is. It's a \$10 burger when you add in all the real costs.

When you pay for that supposedly elitist expensive grass-fed hamburger, you are paying the real cost. You are not depending on illegal-immigrant labor. You are not depending on government subsidies.

You could produce a lot of cotton with slave labor, and it was a great deal. But if I'm selling cotton that I paid people a living wage to grow, and it costs 10 times more than your cotton, am I the elitist cotton seller? I don't think so.

DREHER: The argument you hear is that if we stopped growing food by industrial methods, people would starve. At a time when hunger is an increasingly important global issue, is now really the time to move away from industrial agriculture?

POLLAN: Well, it isn't clear that you couldn't feed people with a more sustainable agriculture. I don't see us moving to a Joel Salatin model all over the country, with all of us fed locally, but the reason is not for lack of land. The reason is lack of farmers.

Industrial agriculture is a Faustian deal. If you are willing to move to a highly mechanized, monoculture-based agriculture that depends on chemicals, each individual farmer can produce a lot more food. We can't move away from that because we don't have enough farmers to feed ourselves sustainably right now. However, in the rest of the world, there are still plenty of people who want to stay on the land. And supposedly, if the whole world's agriculture could achieve the level of organic agriculture in the West, that would increase productivity 40 percent overall worldwide. So I don't know that the problem is land so much as labor, and in places where you've got the labor, sustainable agriculture deserves a real try.

In Joel's model, he gets an immense amount of animal protein off 100 acres of grass. He can out-compete anybody in that system, but it takes three or four guys to do it, whereas a feedlot can produce a lot of meat with very few guys.

We haven't really tried to feed a lot of people organically, and I think that we could do a lot more than we have. But we have driven people off the land over the last 100 years, while we have increased the productivity of each farmer dramatically. I have trouble imagining us going back, although there

is a new generation of farmers coming up. We'll see how they do.

DREHER: The *New York Times* reported recently that more and more young people are reading your work and the work of others and going back to the land. The difference between their movement and the '60s counterculture is that it's now financially viable. So isn't there hope for positive change through the free market?

POLLAN: Yeah. There is a new food economy based on local and artisanal food systems, and the farmers market movement is providing a real option for small farmers who are close to metropolitan areas. Many of these organic farms started as communes. It was a social experiment, more than an economic experiment, and now there is an economics behind it. That's very encouraging.

I think it's a false choice to say we've got to choose one system for growing our food—industrial or organic or grass-fed. It's got to be all of these things. We should create conditions that make it possible to experiment and see what works in the marketplace. If the industrial system is as unsustainable as people have been saying, it is going to fail in some ways, and we still want to be able to eat.

DREHER: Well, the fuel crisis, if it is permanent, could force these sort of experiments.

POLLAN: That tremendous increase in productivity I described is all about cheap fossil fuel. It's the result of fertilizers made from natural gas, pesticides made from petroleum, and diesel fuel driving all this equipment and processing. To get to a point where one American farmer can feed 126 Americans for a year, it's one farmer plus cheap fossil fuel.

The big move of American agriculture over the last 100 years is from a dependence on photosynthesis and solar energy to a dependence on fossil fuel. If indeed the era of cheap fossil fuel is over, we are going to have to find ways to put our food system back on a solar-energy basis, and those who are ahead in doing that are organic and grass-fed-animal farmers. Every calorie you have ever eaten is a product of photosynthesis. So it should be one of the easier parts of our economy to re-solarize, but it will be expensive.

DREHER: We see these big cultural shifts happening on the food front, but still we end up with monstrosities like the recent Farm Bill. At the legislative level, what practical goals should reformers be working toward?

POLLAN: We definitely need policy changes, and the Farm Bill we got was a travesty. Farmers would much prefer to be growing real food that people are eating and enjoying than industrial raw materials that get turned into high-fructose corn syrup or ethanol. We need to give them a path out of that commodity system.

I'm convinced from my reading that completely deregulating agriculture—removing all subsidies or crop supports—would probably not work. We have been there before—the agricultural depression of the '20s. We need some kind of organized mechanism to help farmers keep from bankrupting themselves by overproducing.

There used to be something called the Ever-Normal Granery that would buy grain when it was in oversupply and sell it when it was under supply, sort of like the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. This would give the government or some farmer organization a way to cushion big price spikes, as we have seen this year, and give us as a society a sense of security.

Grain reserves are talked about in the Bible. During fat years, you put some away...

DREHER: That was Joseph's genius—how he got in good with Pharaoh...

POLLAN: Exactly. You see it in other traditions, too: the Mayans also had grain reserves. Now the amount of grain we have worldwide is a six- or eight-day supply. If there were a major shock to the system, people would go hungry quickly. It was one of the reforms of the Nixon administration to get rid of the grain reserve under enormous pressure from agribusiness and big grain traders who wanted more control over the market and wanted to be able to speculate on grain prices.

I also think we need to make it easier for farmers to convert to sustainable agriculture if they want to. That means hiring enough meat inspectors so small processing plants can sprout up around the country.

And given the preciousness of arable land, I think we have to take a look at the rules governing the conversion of farmland in the same way that if you want to build on wetlands, you have to meet a very high burden. I know that's not a conservative idea, but if we reach a population of 10 billion, we will really regret all the houses we are putting up on some of the finest land in the world.

DREHER: One of Salatin's most revolutionary concepts is that a farm is not a machine but an organism, and its parts have to be allowed to express their true natures. A chicken has to express its chicken-ness, for example. More broadly, your work implies that contrary to the basic assumptions of philosophical modernity, there are certain ends in nature that we ignore at our peril...

POLLAN: One of the things I find as I study natural systems is that there is tension between them and capitalism. The drive for efficiency leads to monoculture, which is not the natural expression of plants or any living creatures. Nature is based on mutualistic relations between many different species. This produces lots of value in an ecological sense, and it also cushions against shock. Nature values resilience much more than efficiency. You get a lot of cheap protein by putting 50,000 chickens in one building, but at enormous risk.

DREHER: Yet we think we can organize nature in ways to suit human desires—that it is infinitely plastic and we can do whatever we want with it without paying some price.

POLLAN: Nature has got other business besides pleasing us, and we are very arrogant in the way we approach it. I wrote a book about a plant's-eye view of the world called *The Botany of Desire*. As you go through that imaginative act of understanding what an apple tree wants, you find that you are a better husbandman. You take better care of it, and it will thrive—indeed, it will give you what you want.

We see nature as an inert protoplasm—clay that we can mold into whatever we want—and we are learning that that doesn't really work. We can only grow animals in this kind of confinement with antibiotics, but when we start using them in these amounts, we're suddenly breeding lethal microbes. Look at the staph infection that killed 19,000 Americans two years ago—more than died from AIDS that year. That microbe has been traced to pig farms in Europe and Canada. We haven't traced it to pig farms here because the industry won't let us study it, but presumably it's happening here as well because we swap pigs with Canada all the time.

This makes perfect sense from an efficiency point of view: grow pigs in concentration and use pharmaceuticals on them. But from a biological point of view, it is a disaster.

DREHER: What about human society as an organism? Many people think of Wendell Berry as a man of the Left because he criticizes humankind's unnatural exploitative relationship to agriculture and the environment, but Berry has argued on similar grounds against the individualist sexual ethic pervasive in contemporary culture. Is he on to something?

POLLAN: Berry's on to a lot of things. He's a very wise man. Is he Right or Left? Those categories don't fit him. He is a fierce critic of capitalism because he sees it destroying community, destroying traditional sexual relationships, destroying family. I agree with a lot of that, but not all.

This is a blind spot in a lot of contemporary conservatism—not understanding that while capitalism can be a very constructive force, it can also be very destructive of things that conservatives value.

DREHER: It's also a blind spot of contemporary liberalism to fail to see how pursuing a sort of autonomous individualism when it comes to social forms undermines a community in the same way that capitalism does.

POLLAN: That's right. The Left can be blind to that possibility also.

DREHER: How has your work on food culture and tradition changed your politics?

POLLAN: I keep surprising myself. When I follow the logic of natural systems and the history of our food culture, I find

myself trying very hard to defend traditional ways of doing things, and I never thought of myself as a traditionalist.

When I look at Slow Food, it has got a Left component—a critique of consumer capitalism—and it's got a Right component—that these traditions contain great communitarian and biologic value and are very important to defend.

Conservatism has changed a lot in the last 50 years. The modern incarnation of it looks a lot different in its full-throated embrace of capitalism and not making distinctions between, say, small enterprise and monopoly enterprise. Both ends of the political spectrum have boxed themselves in to some contradictions.

DREHER: Last question: do you see any potential in our fast evolving political environment for Left-Right coalitions based around food, farming, and environmental issues?

POLLAN: I do, but you have to scrape a little bit and get past these class signifiers—words like “arugula” that in our culture signify a social formation characterized by the sort of East Coast, Ivy League cultural baggage that David Brooks is so good at chronicling.

“Arugula,” we should remember, is a marketing term invented by somebody who thought that this very common green, known by farmers all over the Midwest for many years as “rocket,” needed to be tuned up and given new appeal. It's a complete marketing creation, and it's completely ruined a very healthy green—at least from a political point of view.

I think there is an enormous amount of political power lying around on the food issue, and I am just waiting for the right politician to realize that this is a great family issue. If that politician is on the Right, all the better. I think that would be terrific, and I will support him or her. ■

Burning Dinner

Government's scheme to fill gas tanks leaves stomachs empty.

By Timothy P. Carney

THE "FATAL CONCEIT" that Friedrich Hayek wrote about—the hubristic belief that intelligent central planners can better advance the common welfare than can people acting freely—is often used as an analogy or, at least, an overstatement. In the case of ethanol, however, it is literal: by pushing this fuel on us, governments could be starving people to death.

As food prices worldwide shatter records, a quixotic campaign has been launched on the Left and the Right to roll back the government programs that force ethanol upon the American population. Other countries, too, are rethinking programs that turn plants into fuel. The lobby to defend ethanol subsidies and mandates is entrenched—agribusiness, some venture capitalists betting big on government action, and certain hawkish conservatives hoping to end our dependence on Arab and Venezuelan oil. But with corn futures topping \$7 a bushel, riots over food prices erupting around the world, and landscapes in the U.S. changing forever, political support for this subsidized moonshine may be on the wane.

This much is clear: burning food for fuel threatens people's ability to eat.

Ethanol is alcohol squeezed and distilled from agricultural products. In the United States, it almost all comes from corn, while in other countries, most notably Brazil, sugar is the feedstock for ethanol.

Corn ethanol is basically unaged bourbon whiskey—it's the same thing backwoods moonshiners in the mountains of Kentucky and West Virginia used to

make in order to dodge the excise tax or skirt Prohibition. With a gallon of ethanol, you could have a pretty good party on your front porch or drive your Honda Accord about 20 miles on the highway. (You would probably damage your car's engine if you didn't blend it with gasoline.) On an ethical level, many writers have asked recently whether it's immoral to burn food for fuel. The complementary question, especially for an Irishman, is whether it's a sin to pour your booze into a gas tank.

For a century, we've known that grain alcohol can fuel a car. Henry Ford foresaw his automobiles running on ethanol. But gasoline proved to be cheaper and more powerful—a gallon of gasoline will take that same Honda Accord about 30 miles on the highway—and burning corn for fuel was not the most profitable way to use cropland or corn.

But the oil crisis of the late 1970s convinced Uncle Sam to get in the moonshine business. Over the years, governments have found a handful of reasons to subsidize ethanol: it gets us off of foreign oil, it's an oxygenate that helps turn deadly carbon monoxide into harmless (or so environmentalists used to argue) carbon dioxide, and it benefits farmers. The true motivation for government support of ethanol, of course, has been the political influence of the ethanol lobby—Archer Daniels Midland, the world's top ethanol producer, is legendary for its political connections, and Iowa's role in the presidential nominating process has made corn converts of many ambitious politicians.

In the Energy Tax Act of 1978, Congress created a special carve-out to boost ethanol: gas stations could earn a 4-cent credit against the gas tax for selling gasoline that included at least 10 percent ethanol. If you ran a gas station and bought a gallon of ethanol for \$2.00, you were really only paying \$1.60 because of the tax credits.

This tax credit eventually grew from effectively 40 cents per gallon of ethanol to 52 cents and was then switched from a gas-tax credit to an income-tax credit. But Washington didn't stop there. Congress imposed a tariff on imported ethanol of 54 cents per gallon and granted huge allowances in federal fuel-economy standards to carmakers who sold cars that can run on high-percentage blends of ethanol. States soon piled on with subsidies for ethanol processing plants and for gas stations that installed pumps for E-85 (85 percent ethanol).

More recently, with all these subsidies still insufficient to create a booming demand in ethanol, Congress dropped the carrot and picked up the stick: the 2005 Energy Bill mandated that gas companies buy biofuels. In 2007, Congress boosted the mandate so that now U.S. consumers are required to buy 9 billion gallons of ethanol. By 2022, the mandate will be 36 billion gallons.

The lesson is clear: people would hardly buy ethanol as fuel if not for government action. Without the subsidies and mandates, ethanol demand would be negligible, which would be a good thing.

The facts about ethanol that required these subsidies and made it an unsustainable product on the free market also make its widespread use damaging. The energy inputs—fuel to run the tractors, make the fertilizer, distill the alcohol, and ship the product—are huge, and the output, again, is small. (Gasoline is 50 percent more powerful than ethanol.) What is the return on investment, energy-wise? Experts disagree, but the government numbers reflect a 25 percent gain, while Cornell University scientist David Pimentel concludes that more fossil-fuel energy goes into making a gallon of ethanol than comes out of it—a literal waste of energy.

THE FIRST **FOOD CRISIS** OF THE MILLENNIUM HAS BEEN CAUSED BY **BIG-GOVERNMENT POLICIES** PUSHED IN THE NAME OF THE **ENVIRONMENT**.

In any event, ethanol requires land—acres and acres of farmland. In one year, according to Hudson Institute expert Dennis Avery, an acre of corn yields 375 gallons of ethanol. That means that this year, 24 million acres of farmland have essentially become oilfields. Avery writes that “total U.S. crop plantings have recently been about 440 million acres,” meaning that more than 5 percent of all cropland might be dedicated to meeting the federal ethanol mandates. Other subsidies and state mandates could drive land usage for ethanol higher.

Joseph Glauber, chief economist at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, estimates that nearly one-third of the entire U.S. corn crop this year will be dedicated to ethanol, up from about 7 percent in 2000.

The economics are simple: when corn is being used for fuel and farm fields are no longer producing food or feed, the price of food and feed goes up. The USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service finds that farmers

received \$5.15 for a bushel of corn in May, up from an already high \$3.49 a year ago. Corn futures, trading near \$2.50 on the Chicago Board of Trade throughout 2006, climbed to almost \$7 this past month.

And because farmers are growing corn instead of other crops and selling corn as fuel instead of as cattle feed, the prices of other crops and animal products have been affected as well. Consumer Price Index figures from April (the most recent month for which data is available) show soaring prices among many staples. Bread is up to \$1.37 per pound, a 32 percent increase from March 2006, just before the ethanol

mandate went into effect. Eggs and milk are also up for the same period, 59 and 20 percent respectively. Ground chuck has climbed 10 percent, following an 18 percent bump from 2003 to 2006. Beer prices are climbing, too, spurred in part by higher costs for energy, bottling, and water, but price spikes in the agricultural elements of beer are the big drivers—barley is up 87 percent since 2006, while hops have more than tripled.

These rising prices hit consumers in obvious ways, but they can also ruin small businesses. Higher ingredient costs may cut into Budweiser's bottom line, causing a 1.4 percent drop in profits. But for smaller microbreweries, ones with narrower profit margins, continued increases in ingredient prices could be disastrous. In Mexico, family-operated tortilla stands have had to hike their prices, so the poor clientele are switching to cheaper, mass-produced foods like Cup-a-Noodles.

Ethanol is obviously not the only factor driving up these prices. The falling

dollar and rising oil costs make up much of the increase. But even the Department of Agriculture, an ethanol partisan, reports that ethanol could be responsible for 25 percent of the rise. The International Food Policy Research Institute estimates that ethanol is responsible for 30 percent of the increase.

For a middle-class American, increased grocery bills are a drag. For poor Mexicans, higher corn prices can be devastating. In January 2007, thousands of Mexicans took to the streets to protest high tortilla prices, which since 2006 have nearly tripled in some places.

It's an understatement to call tortillas a staple of poor Mexicans' diets: they provide 40 percent of their protein, according to Mexican nutrition expert Amanda Gálvez, who told the *Washington Post*, “It is absolutely crucial for our population to keep eating tortillas.”

The *Post* explained the connection between ethanol and tortilla prices:

Ethanol, which has become more popular as an alternative fuel in the United States and elsewhere because of high oil prices, is generally made with yellow corn. But the price of white corn, which is used to make tortillas, is indexed in Mexico to the international price of yellow corn, said Puente, the Mexico City economist.

This year, we have seen food riots in Haiti and Bangladesh. Here again, many factors have driven up food prices, including the bad policies of these Third World governments. But it's undeniable that bad government policies in the U.S. are exacerbating the global problem in places where high food prices could mean starvation or malnutrition.

It's strange, in a way: ruthless capitalism is supposed to cause poor people to starve. Instead, the first food crisis of the millennium has been caused by big-

government policies pushed in the name of the environment. Increasingly, though, environmentalists are turning on ethanol as they see the harm it does to land and water.

American Rivers, a nonprofit, now lists the corn-country Niobrara River in Nebraska as one of the ten most endangered rivers in the U.S., thanks in part to the huge diversions of water that irrigating corn for ethanol requires. This is a major cause of concern as the Niobrara provides habitat for some threatened species, such as piping plovers, least terns, and whooping cranes. University of Iowa (of all places) engineering professor Jareld Schnoor concluded that ethanol's toll on the water supply "is clearly not sustainable." In February, *Newsweek* writer Jim Moscou told the story of Yuma County, Colorado, "one of the top-three corn-producing counties in the country" where one man in the ranching business told him, "The lakes are gone. The wetlands are gone." "We're going to make the area a desert," the former rancher predicted. Ethanol's water pinch—and not just its land grab—hurts ranchers, which makes meat more expensive.

Ethanol slurps up water throughout its process, not just in irrigation. After the corn is harvested, ground, and dried, plenty of water is needed to ferment and distill it. A recent *Economist* article told the story of one ethanol plant in Florida:

Officials in Tampa, Florida, got a surprise recently when a local firm building the state's first ethanol-production factory put in a request for 400,000 gallons a day of city water. The request by U.S. Enviro-fuels would make the facility one of the city's top ten water consumers overnight, and the company plans to double its size. Florida is suffer-

ing from a prolonged drought. Rivers and lakes are at record lows and residents wonder where the extra water will come from.

In addition to drying up our rivers and aquifers, ethanol could be polluting our drinking water. Corn needs lots of nitrogen fertilizer, and a good portion of those chemicals leaks back into the soil. University of Minnesota soil scientist Gyles Randall explained the process to Minnesota Public Radio: "More nitrogen on the field means more runoff. When farmers plant corn year after year, the soil becomes clumpy and hard to manage."

Randall says farmers will need to till their fields more often. More tilling means more erosion. And erosion increases runoff.

Some of that runoff ends up in Minnesota's rivers and lakes. But Randall says that in the southeast, that runoff gets absorbed into the aquifers. "We will see an upturn in the nitrate concentration in the groundwater, and then we sink our wells into that groundwater," he says. "That becomes the drinking

mandates; the press is usually not so skeptical about environmental measures or big-government programs. Now it's conventional wisdom that ethanol carries with it a parade of unintended dislocations. But will this bad press spur a change in policy?

Efforts are afoot to pull back our federal ethanol program. Congressman Jeff Flake has introduced a bill to undo the mandate. A coalition of free-market groups, together with the Grocery Manufacturers Association, is leading a pushback on ethanol incentives.

With food prices high and pocket-book issues promising to play a central role in the 2008 presidential and Congressional elections, Republicans could grasp an opportunity here. John McCain has consistently opposed ethanol subsidies, and he even went out of his way to do so in Iowa. Barack Obama, on the other hand, is an ethanol backer. The Democratic Congress expanded the ethanol mandate in 2007, and so Republican challengers and open-seat candidates could pin some of the high food prices on Democrats eager to please the agribusiness lobby.

BY ENCOURAGING FARMERS TO GROW **ONE CROP SEASON AFTER SEASON** AND ESCHEW CROP-ROTATION, **ETHANOL SUBSIDIES ARE DEPLETING SOIL OF NUTRIENTS.**

water supply for many in this state." High nitrogen levels cause health problems in children and pregnant women.

There's also the problem of monoculture, which has serious potential long-term downsides. By encouraging farmers to grow one crop season after season and eschew crop-rotation, ethanol subsidies are depleting soil of nutrients, probably causing even greater damage for the future.

For a limited-government conservative, it's gratifying to see the mainstream media take on ethanol subsidies and

Ethanol could become the start of an alliance between McCain's good-government instincts and small-government conservatives, but neither the presumptive nominee nor Congressional Republicans seems to be as focused on ethanol as the media is. In the flurry of the election season, the issue may get backburnered—but high food prices seem here to stay. ■

Timothy P. Carney is author of The Big Ripoff: How Big Business and Big Government Steal Your Money.

Canada's Speech Impediment

Our northern neighbors learn the limits of free expression.

By Michael Brendan Dougherty

"THE FOLLOWING is not intended for those who are suffering from an unwanted sexual identity crisis. For you, I have understanding, care, compassion and tolerance. I sympathize with you and offer you my love and fellowship." That is how Rev. Stephen Boissoin began his 2002 letter to the editor of the *Red Deer Advocate*, his local Alberta newspaper. The youth minister wrote to protest a government-funded initiative to "teach school-aged children in grades K through 12 that homosexuality was normal, necessary, acceptable and productive." He could hardly have guessed that six years later a divorce lawyer working for the Alberta Human Rights Commission (AHRC) would deem his remarks a violation of human rights, demand a public apology, and require that he pay \$5,000 to the heterosexual university professor who filed the complaint. Free speech in Canada is now subject to review.

Boissoin's letter denounced what he called "the homosexual machine." He wrote, "these activists are not morally upright citizens, concerned about the best interests of our society. They are perverse, self-centered and morally deprived individuals who are spreading their psychological disease into every area of our lives." He extended his jeremiad to include a "Modern society [that] has become dispassionate to the cause of righteousness. Many people are so apathetic and desensitized today that they cannot even accurately define the term 'morality.'"

Boissoin says that some Christians have contacted him saying he should have softened his message and made his case from Scripture. But he tells *TAC* that the letter was meant to provoke a strong reaction. "You can word it as fluffy as you want," Boissoin says, "and then it's just chuckled at. There would be no response. It was a letter designed to make people think, to make people angry."

The letter certainly angered Darren Lund, a local teacher and now assistant professor at the University of Calgary. Lund had made a small name for himself by agitating against the work of Samaritan's Purse, a Christian charity, in public schools. The charity had an evangelistic aim, he claimed. Then Lund filed his complaint to the AHRC alleging that Boissoin's letter contributed to a climate of hatred against homosexuals.

The AHRC derives its quasi-legal authority from Canada's Human Rights and Multiculturalism Acts. Operating outside the constraints of the conventional justice system allows Canadian Human Rights Commissions to judge motives and use testimony of hurt feelings as evidence—things that would be inadmissible in criminal court. Failing to comply with the HRC's rulings, however, can result in criminal charges. Lund's complaint was originally dismissed when an investigator determined that the *Red Deer Advocate* was responsible for the publication of the letter, not Reverend Boissoin. Lund appealed, and the case came before Lori G. Andreachuk—not an expert in human rights or free speech but a former divorce attorney.

On Nov. 30, 2007, Andreachuk, after collecting testimony from Boissoin, Lund, and several legal experts, issued the substantive ruling in the case. Paragraph 357 concluded bluntly, "the publication's exposure of homosexuals to hatred and contempt trumps the freedom of speech." Furthermore, "it cannot be the case that any speech wrapped in the 'guise' of politics or religion is beyond reproach." The findings were rendered with stunning informality. One pro-Boissoin witness's testimony was summarized this way: "Dr. Cooper states that if activists use taxpayer dollars to promote homosexuality in public schools then Christians have a right to stand up and say they do not think it is okay."

Boissoin's sentence—or "the decision on remedy" in the AHRC's language—was delivered in May. In it, the AHRC stated, "In this case, there is no specific individual who can be compensated as there is no direct victim who has come forward." By the commission's own admission, no human was directly harmed by Boissoin's human-rights violation. But the AHRC ruled, "Mr. Boissoin ... shall cease publishing in newspapers, by email, on the radio, in public speeches, or on the Internet, in future, disparaging remarks about gays and homosexuals." In other words, Boissoin will endure a lifetime ban on publicly expressing his sincerely held religious beliefs about homosexuality.

The AHRC partly rationalized its decision by saying it would be good to make an example of Boissoin:

There is also a **significant symbolic value in the public denunciation of the actions that are the subject of this complaint.** Similarly, there is the **potential educative and ultimately larger preventative** benefit that can be achieved by open discussion of the principles enunciated in this or any Tribunal decision. [Bold theirs]

Boissoin was also compelled to submit an apology to the *Red Deer Advocate* for his views, although forced apologies are considered cruel and unusual in criminal cases.

Because the AHRC also found that Lund, “although not a direct victim, did expend considerable time and energy and suffered ridicule and harassment as a result of his complaint,” Boissoin was ordered to apologize to Lund and to cut him a \$5,000 check. Of course, “remedies” like this create a financial incentive for Canadians to freelance as human-rights police. Richard Warman, a former member of Canada’s Human Rights Commission, has initiated dozens of complaints under Section 13 of the Canadian Human Rights Act that empowers the HRC to deal with hate messages sent over the Internet. All Section 13 cases have resulted in conviction.

The Boissoin ruling and sentence have come down just as Canadian Human Rights Commissions have been investigating two right-of-center journalists, Ezra Levant and Mark Steyn. In 2006, Levant, a self-described classical liberal and then editor of the *Western Standard*, republished the infamous Dutch cartoons depicting the prophet Mohammad. Syed Soharwardy of the Islamic Supreme Council of Canada was offended and took his case to the HRC.

When he was asked to appear before the commission in early 2008, Levant’s lawyers demanded that their client’s testimony be recorded on video. In the clips

posted on YouTube, Levant delivers a fiery denunciation, rejecting rattled investigator Shirley McGovern’s authority, stating that he published the cartoons “for the most offensive reasons imaginable,” and daring the HRC to find him guilty. The videos were watched over half a million times. Soharwardy eventually withdrew his complaint, telling the *National Post*, “Over the two years that we have gone through the process, I understand that most Canadians see this as an issue of freedom of speech, that that principle is sacred and holy in our society.” Soharwardy might have concluded otherwise if he had waited to see the Boissoin ruling.

Columnist and author Mark Steyn has also been under investigation by the British Columbia Human Rights Commission for an article published in *Maclean’s*, “The Future Belongs to Islam.” The Canadian Islamic Congress alleges that Steyn’s piece, and other articles published between 2005 and 2007, are “flagrantly Islamophobic” and “subject Canadian Muslims to hatred and contempt.” Steyn has told the media that he hopes to put the investigating commissions themselves on trial: “We want to lose so we can take it to a real court and if necessary up to the Supreme Court of Canada and we can get the ancient liberties of free-born Canadian citizens that have been taken away from them by tribunals like this.”

The *New York Times* took notice of the Steyn case in a front-page article, “American Exception, Unlike Others, U.S. Defends Freedom to Offend in Speech.” Aden Fine, a senior staff attorney with the ACLU who specializes in free-speech cases, told *TAC* that the strength of First Amendment jurisprudence is so well established that “even after September 11, when these issues have been presented in a more difficult way, the courts have correctly and consistently rejected any further restric-

tions on speech.” But the *Times* found several American legal thinkers who recommended revising that consensus. New York University professor Jeremy Waldron said that other countries may not be wrong “when they say that a liberal democracy must take affirmative responsibility for protecting the atmosphere of mutual respect against certain forms of vicious attack.” Anthony Lewis, a former *Times* columnist, averred that the Supreme Court’s judgment that incitement can be criminalized only when it is likely to result in “imminent violence” may be too restrictive and leave some “genuinely dangerous” speech beyond the reach of law. These scholars, along with an entire class of sensitivity trainers and diversity experts, will be carefully monitoring the challenges to Canada’s human-rights tribunals by Steyn and others.

For his part, Boissoin is staking out a position of respectful defiance. Asked whether he intends to perform in the manner prescribed by the AHRC’s “remedy,” he promises to “exercise my God-given choice to be an autonomous being and continue being who God is calling me to be. I will not apologize.” He has appealed the decision and is seeking vindication in civil court. Boissoin and lawyers also plan to expose the AHRC for providing funds to PFLAG (Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), the group whose education initiative Boissoin protested in his letter to the *Advocate*. If proven, Boissoin’s charges would reveal the AHRC to be a racket—giving favored activists public funds then shielding them from criticism.

The reverend is prepared to lose. “I’ll have a jailhouse ministry before I apologize,” he says. Boissoin is already considered a kind of Christian martyr. It’s up to Canada’s human-rights tribunal and courts to prove whether, in this case, he is also a prophet. ■

Looking Into the Lobby

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee's annual conference is one of Washington's most important—and least reported—events.

By Philip Weiss

FOR THREE DAYS in the capital in early June, suspense built over the question of how the American Israel Public Affairs Committee conference would greet Barack Obama. There was a lot of grousing about Obama in the hallways of the Washington Convention Center, and AIPAC officials repeatedly warned the faithful to be respectful. "We are not a debate society or a protest movement. ... our goal is to have a friend in the White House," executive director Howard Kohr said in a strict tone. It wasn't hard to imagine things going poorly: Obama gets booed on national television. He feels insulted. Conservative Jewish donors and voters turn off to Obama. He becomes president without their support. AIPAC has no friend in the Oval Office.

But of course, Obama complied. His speech became the annual example the conference provides of a powerful man truckling. Two years ago, it was Vice President Cheney's red-meat speech attacking the Palestinians. Last year, it was Pastor John Hagee's scary speech saying that giving the Arabs any part of Jerusalem was the same as giving it to the Taliban. Obama took a similar line. He suggested that he would use force to stop Iran from getting nuclear weapons, made no mention of Palestinian human rights, and said that Jerusalem "must remain undivided," a statement so disastrous to the peace process that his staff rescinded it the next day. Big deal. The actual meeting had gone swimmingly.

This was my first AIPAC conference, and the first surprise was how blatant the business of wielding influence is. The conference makes no bones about this function, the most savage expression of which is the Tuesday dinner at which AIPAC performs its "roll call," where the names of all the politicians who have come to the conference are read off from the stage by three barkers in near auctioneer fashion. The pols try to outdo one another in I-love-Israel encomia. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi surely won the day when she teared up while dangling the dogtags of three Israeli soldiers captured by Hezbollah and Hamas two years ago.

The second big surprise was that apart from coverage of the headline speakers, the AIPAC conference is a media no man's land. It would be hard to imagine a more naked exhibition of political power: a convention of 7,000 mostly rich people, with more than half the Congress in attendance, as well as all the major presidential candidates, the prime minister of Israel, the minority leader, the majority leader, and the speaker of the House. Yet there is precious little journalism about the spectacle in full. The reason seems obvious: the press would have to write openly about a forbidden subject, Jewish influence. They would have to take on an unpleasant informative task that they have instead left to two international relations scholars in their 50s—Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer, authors of last year's book *The Israel Lobby*.

The press is missing a phantasmagorical event. Imagine a basement meeting in the Warsaw Ghetto transplanted to the biggest hall in Vegas, and you have something of the feeling of the thing. The staging is faultless. Little documentaries called "Zionist Stories" play on the Jumbotron, complete with footage of Auschwitz, and then the subject of the documentary comes out on stage to thundering applause. There is breakout session after breakout session on Middle East policy and Jewish identity and anti-Semitism, with star turns by Natan Sharansky, Bill Kristol, and Leon Wieseltier. The press was excluded from "Advanced Lobbying Techniques," but still this is a feast of the political condition. And posh. The roll call is described by AIPAC as the largest seated dinner in Washington. The wine flows. I went about in a daze of awe and admiration.

My awe was for men like Haim Saban, a toymaker and giant donor to the Democratic Party. After his Zionist story, Saban came out on stage wearing a platinum tie and white shirt and silver gray suit. He has wonderful presence and something of an Arab look—black-haired, wide forehead. He was surrounded by 200 college students, veterans of the Saban Leadership Seminars he sponsors at AIPAC.

On Middle East policy, Saban is barely distinguishable from his Republican counterparts, who are there in equal force. The main hall of the conference

was filled with lavishly-produced banners featuring AIPAC donors, not a few with trophy wives, alongside statements of their mission. There was Donald Diamond, an Arizona real estate developer whom the *New York Times* recently profiled on the front page after he raised \$250,000 for John McCain. The *Times* said nothing in its piece about Diamond's Israel work. But that was all the banner was about. "The U.S.-Israel relationship is the single most important determinant of democracy in the world, and we must commit to securing it," Diamond wrote. "It is so obvious to us that the Jewish community is a family and that we have to take care of each other."

I was writing that down when an AIPAC spokesman stopped to check my credentials. The audience for this stuff isn't the public, it's people in the hall—other rich Jews who might put AIPAC in their wills.

At most conventions, people gather out of self-interest. Therein lies my admiration: the AIPAC'ers didn't come for selfish reasons. They are devoutly concerned with the lives of people they don't know, very far away. Yes, people with whom they feel tribal kinship. When Israelis came out on the dais to speak, they were almost invariably overwhelmed by the generosity, if not the Vegas schmaltz. "There is a tremendous amount of love in this place," Meir Nissensohn, an Israeli executive of IBM, said in wonder. "If it was a beaker, it would explode." Even a sharp critic like myself of what AIPAC is doing to American policy in the Middle East was frequently moved by the pure loving feeling that surrounds you at every moment.

Among the devout there is only one real issue: What is the latest AIPAC line? This is the organization's function. After consulting closely with the Israeli political leadership (leaning toward the right wing), AIPAC regurgitates a simple ver-

sion of Israeli policy to its followers, who in turn regurgitate that line to American politicians. AIPAC'ers do this with the conviction that Israel's life is on the line. "It is we that are the guardians of that relationship," AIPAC president David Victor said. James Tisch, the Lowes executive and leader in the Jewish community, warned the audience that it might be 1939 all over again were it not for them.

AIPAC makes sure the Israeli line is America's line by cultivating politicians before they reach the national scene. Victor described this process when he warned the audience that 10 percent of Congress will be new next year because so many seats are open: "Do we know them? Do they know us? Have they been to Israel? Do they understand the issues we care so deeply about?" Finding Israel activists in the suburbs of Detroit is easy, Victor said. "But how about finding the one right person to reach out to candidates for communities like Muscle

Israel came from many people and sources, not specifically from Mr. Hasten.") Dan Senor, an analyst on CNN and former AIPAC intern, boasted that AIPAC won over Spencer Abraham when he was the head of the state Republican Party, years before he became a Michigan senator. The party was \$500,000 in debt, and an AIPAC leader helped him pay that off. And of course, the famous story was told of George W. Bush going up in Ariel Sharon's helicopter in 1998, two years before he ran for president, and saying of Israel's ten-mile waist, "We have driveways in Texas longer than that."

The anxiety about Obama is that he is so new to the scene that few people have had a chance to get to him. The relationship guy is Lee Rosenberg of Chicago, who introduced Obama. "I can personally attest that Senator Obama is a genuine friend of Israel," he said. In 2006, Obama "fulfilled a pledge he made to the Chicago Jewish community" and

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Shoals, Alabama, or Tacoma, Washington, or Council Bluffs, Iowa? Ladies and gentlemen, the success or failure of the pro-Israel community rests on three words, our personal relationships." And people accused Walt and Mearsheimer of fostering a conspiracy theory.

AIPAC flashes its relationships the way kids trade baseball cards. Bill Kristol said that Hart Hasten, a Holocaust survivor and successful Indianapolis businessman, had been crucial to shaping Dan Quayle's view of Israel, having "spent a lot of time" with Quayle when he was still a congressman. (Quayle's office later told me, "The statement Bill Kristol made was not exactly accurate. Mr. Quayle said his broad knowledge of

visited Israel. And the topper: Obama "has gotten to know" Benjamin Netanyahu, the former prime minister who is against ever dividing Jerusalem. Rosenberg looked pale, drained—as queasily forceful as a mob boss vouching for an unknown family's bona fides.

The good news I can report is the new AIPAC line. In some ways the organization is belligerent: speakers emphasized the need to attack Iran before it gets nukes and to invade Gaza to take on Hamas. But peace is in the air, too, now that Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's government is working overtime to cut a deal with the Palestinians on the West Bank and with the Syrians for the return of the Golan Heights. AIPAC reflected

this policy. I heard a few conference-goers saying at microphones that the Bible gives Israel a right to the West Bank. But they received only a smattering of applause, and in one instance the moderator said the questioner was using inappropriate language.

The soul of the conference for me was Tal Becker, the highly personable Israeli negotiator. "I see [Palestinian negotiator] Saeb Erekat a lot more than I see my wife and kids," he said, promising that if he and Palestinian moderates fail to reach an agreement, their goal is "to keep talking and keep talking and keep talking."

Yet before you get out your handkerchief, reflect that AIPAC has for more than 30 years promoted the colonization process. In 1975, when President Ford wanted to reassess Mideast policy over Israeli intransigence, he was cut off at the knees by an AIPAC letter signed by 76 senators. Then in 1989, when James Baker went before AIPAC and told them to give up their idea of a Greater Israel including the West Bank, George H.W. Bush received a letter of anger signed by 94 senators. In both instances, AIPAC was hewing to the Israeli government line and nullifying American policymaking.

No, AIPAC's change of heart cannot be ascribed to the good thinking of American Jews. They're not thinking at all. They have passed on their full powers of judgment to the Israeli government. In that sense, the Zionists in that hall might best be compared to Communists of the '30s and '40s, who also abandoned their judgment to a far off authority even as they argued this and that subclause codicil in intense councils. On my train ride back to New York, a little rich kid of about 14, traveling with his uncle in the seat behind me, called his parents to complain that Obama's views on Israel seemed "tailored" and "he's never really stood up for

Israel." Indoctrination, pure and simple.

The great sadness here is that American Jewry is the most educated, most affluent segment of the public. Yet on this issue there is little independent thinking. The obvious question is whether they don't have dual loyalty. As a Jew, I feel uncomfortable using the phrase, given its long history, but the facts are inarguable. Leon Wieseltier of *The New Republic* speaks of everything "we" should do to make peace with the Palestinians, then corrects himself to say what Israel should do. Speaker after speaker says that Israel is in our hearts. People who emigrate to Israel are applauded, and when the national anthems are played, one cantor sings the "Star Spangled Banner," but the "Hatikvah" has two cantors belting it out, with the audience roaring along. Maybe most revealing, I heard a right-wing Israeli politician sharply criticizing Olmert's policy in the West Bank. Think of the scandal it would cause if American politicians went abroad and criticized the president's foreign policy. It's no scandal here because AIPAC is a virtual extension of Israel.

Of course, AIPAC and its roll call of politicians would say that American and Israeli interests are identical. I wonder how those politicians really feel. Their I-love-the-miracle-of-Israel rhetoric is so endless that it creates an undercurrent of doth protest too much—an impression that if there weren't so much money at stake, they would run from Israel with winged heels.

AIPAC takes care to remind the pols of deeper reasons to help the Jews. The Holocaust imagery never stops. And there is a related theme: that Jews are the golden goose of Western society. The very last of the "Zionist Stories" AIPAC showed before Obama and Clinton spoke was of a scientist, IBM's Nissensohn. The piece emphasized Israel's contribution to high-tech industry from

software to desalination, hinting at a traditional Jewish idea: for a society to flourish, it must treat Jews well. Haim Saban's story made the same point. Look what Egypt lost when it forced the Saban family to flee.

The theme of the conference was "The U.S.-Israel Relationship: Built to Last." But that seems another case of protesting too much. AIPAC is beset on many sides.

It surely noticed how much attention Palestinians got this spring for commemorations of the Nakba, their dispossession in 1948 and onwards. AIPAC fought back with its own dispossession narrative. About 700,000 Jews, including Haim Saban, were forced out of Arab societies following the formation of Israel. One of them was novelist Eli Amir, who grew up in privileged Baghdad and was forced into a refugee camp in 1950. Amir appeared live by satellite and berated AIPAC for not highlighting his story before this year.

Another problem for AIPAC is the growing alienation of younger Jews from Israel's hardline policies, especially as those Jews do well here and assimilate. "I worry a lot more about the American Jewish community than I do about Israel—about which I have grave doubts," Wieseltier said.

AIPAC is happy to work with non-Jewish Americans. At one dinner, I sat at the same table with Mark and Carrie Burns, Christian evangelical radio hosts from Illinois. Carrie said that many Christians she knows will vote on Jerusalem being in the hands of the Jews as a litmus issue. Thus AIPAC may hope to replace dwindling elite influence with populist numbers. I wouldn't hold my breath. Carrie said that at a synagogue she addressed, the first question came from a high-school girl who said, "But isn't Israel an apartheid state?"

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The British Blunder

In attacking my new book, *Churchill, Hitler, and the Unnecessary War*, Victor Davis Hanson, the court historian of the neoconservatives, charges me with

“rewriting ... facts” and showing “ingratitude” to American and British soldiers who fought World Wars I and II. Both charges are false, and transparently so.

Hanson cites not a single fact I got wrong and ignores the fact that the book is dedicated to my mother’s four brothers, who fought in World War II. Moreover, the book begins by celebrating the greatness of the British nation and heroism of its soldier-sons. Did Hanson even read it?

The focus of *The Unnecessary War* is the colossal blunders by British statesmen that reduced Britain from the greatest empire since Rome into an island dependency of the United States in three decades. It is a cautionary tale, written for America, which is treading the same path Britain trod in the early 20th century.

Hanson agrees that the Versailles Treaty of 1919 was “flawed,” but says Germany had it coming for the harsh peace the Germans imposed on France in 1871 and Russia in 1918.

Certainly, the amputation of Alsace-Lorraine by Bismarck’s Germany was a blunder that engendered French hatred and a passion for revenge. But does Teutonic stupidity in 1871 justify British stupidity in 1919?

In 1918, Germany accepted an armistice on Wilson’s 14 Points, laid down her arms, and surrendered her High Seas Fleet. Yet once disarmed, Germany was subjected to a starvation blockade, denied the right to fish in the Baltic Sea, and saw all her colonies and private property therein confiscated by British, French, and Japanese imperialists, in naked violation of Wilson’s 14 Points. Germans,

Austrians, and Hungarians by the millions were then consigned to Belgium, France, Italy, Serbia, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Poland, and Lithuania in violation of the principle of self-determination.

Germany was dismembered, disarmed, saddled with unpayable debt, and forced, under threat of further starvation and invasion, to confess she alone was morally responsible for the war—which was a lie, and the Allies knew it.

Where was Hitler born? “At Versailles,” replied Lady Astor.

As for the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk Germany imposed on Russia in 1918, is Hanson aware that the prison house of nations for which he wails, which was forced to disgorge Finland, the Baltic republics, Poland, Ukraine, and the Caucasus, was ruled by Bolsheviks? Was it a war crime for the Kaiser to break up Lenin’s evil empire? Two years after Brest-Litovsk, Churchill urged Britain to revise Versailles, bring Germany into the Allied fold, and intervene in Russia’s civil war against Lenin and Trotsky.

As for my thesis that the British war guarantee to Poland of March 31, 1939, was the fatal blunder that guaranteed World War II and brought down the British Empire, Hanson is mocking: “Buchanan argues that, had the imperialist Winston Churchill not pushed poor Hitler into a corner, he would have never invaded Poland in 1939, which triggered an unnecessary Allied response.”

First, Hanson should get his prime ministers straight. It was Neville Chamberlain who issued the war guarantee to Poland after the collapse of his Munich Accord.

Churchill was not even in the cabinet.

Second, Hanson implies that I portray Hitler as a misunderstood victim. This is mendacious. Hitler’s foul crimes are fully related.

Third, was it moral for Britain to promise the Poles military aid they could not and did not deliver, thus steeling Polish resolve to resist Hitler and guaranteeing Poland’s annihilation? Was it wise for Britain to declare a world war on the strongest nation in Europe over a town, Danzig, where the British prime minister thought Germany had the stronger claim?

What were the consequences for Poland of trusting in Britain? Crucifixion on a Nazi-Soviet cross, the Katyn massacre of the Polish officer corps, Treblinka and Auschwitz, annihilation of the Home Army, millions of brave Polish dead, half a century of Bolshevik terror.

And how did Churchill honor Britain’s commitment to Poland? During trips to Moscow, Churchill bullied the Polish prime minister into ceding to Stalin that half of his country Stalin had gotten from his devil’s pact with Hitler, and yielded to Stalin’s demand for annexation of the Baltic republics and Bolshevik rule of a dozen nations of Eastern and Central Europe.

Was it worth 50 million dead so Stalin, whose victims, as of Sept. 1, 1939, were 1,000 times Hitler’s, could occupy not only Poland, for which Britain went to war, but all of Christian Europe to the Elbe?

Churchill was right when he told FDR in December 1941 it was “the unnecessary war” and right again in 1948, when he wrote that in Stalin the world now faced “even worse perils” than those of Hitler. So what had it all been for?

Historian Hanson should go back to tutoring undergrads about the Peloponnesian War and Syracuse Expedition. ■

From Beirut to Bin Laden

Instead of maintaining its independence of action in the Mideast, the U.S. has backed one dangerous regime after another.

By James Webb

IN THE LATE SUMMER and early fall of 1983, I spent time as a journalist in Beirut, covering the Marine peacekeeping force that in October of that year lost more than 240 dead in a suicide bombing at the Beirut airport. The governing structure of Lebanon in the 1980s closely resembled that of Iraq today: a weak central government surrounded by powerful, armed militias engaged in a many-sided civil war, with a stronger nation—in this case Syria rather than Iran—looking menacingly over its shoulder.

On any given day in Beirut, one never knew who was going to shoot at whom, or for what reason. Travelers could not even fly into the Beirut airport in mid-1983. The United States Marines were defending it on the ground, but the Druze militia had pockmarked the airfield with artillery shells and kept it under continuous surveillance from the nearby Chouf Mountains, making the airfield unusable. To reach Beirut, our television crew took a flight from Athens to Larnaca, Cyprus, where at midnight we boarded a reeking old steamer that crossed an ocean passage in the darkness, bringing us to the Beirut seaport. The steamer was packed with a mix of Lebanese and international customers, and the old man who operated the small ship was very happy because the closed airport in Beirut was bringing him a bonanza. We sat all night in his dining area, smoking cigarettes, drinking beer, and eating his homemade sandwiches. It

seemed as though he was selling the beer and sandwiches for five of anything—five francs, five dollars, five marks. There was no alternative, and the food in Beirut would be just as random, so we were glad to pay.

In the early morning, we docked at the port of Beirut. Just next to us, a French military ship was unloading fresh troops, weapons, and supplies. A British army unit was also in Beirut, just off a tour in Northern Ireland. An Italian army unit also had joined the four-nation peacekeeping effort. The French, who along with our Marines would suffer a serious suicide bombing attack in October, were all business as their ship unloaded its cargo. A platoon of their soldiers had set up in a hasty perimeter, lying on the dirt-packed berms above the water's edge. Even though the port activities and the customs house near the harbor seemed to bustle with normalcy, their rifles were pointed toward the city.

It sprawled before us, brightly colored, sand-burnt, many parts of it broken into pieces by years of conflict. From the water's edge inward, Beirut was a place of latent chaos, scarred with memories of violence. The streets leading from the port opened up into the infamous Green Line, a dividing street between different ethnic and religious sects where a once beautiful part of the city was now obliterated, cratered, and ruined. The Green Line was haunting, lifeless and silent. Driving through it, I

was reminded of the pictures I had seen of Dresden following the Allied bombings of World War II.

Beirut, once the playground of the Arab world, was now living inside a conundrum, still pulsing with energy yet powerless to recapture its former stability and charm. Various Sunni, Shia, Christian, and Druze militias and submilitias, and factions and subfactions, were slugging it out with a vicious randomness in a civil war that had begun eight years before. And the Syrians, who have historically considered Lebanon part of Greater Syria, had a habit of rising like armed referees every now and then from over the horizon to join the fray.

In one typical engagement that I covered, a United States Marine outpost was brought under fire by a Druze militia position after the Druze had been shot at by Lebanese army soldiers from a checkpoint on a nearby road. Eventually, a Syrian unit began firing heavy machine guns at both the Marines and the "Lebs" from a position on the far side of a distant string of hills. All the while, in the far distance, the Christian Phalange militia was engaged in an artillery duel with another unit that we were unable to identify. Artillery shells hammered into six-story apartment buildings, smacking their outside walls and making sprays of dust. The lights were out inside the buildings. The occupants had already fled to return only if there were to happen, somehow, to be a ceasefire.

What was the reason for all of this? Borrowing a thought from my frustrating days as an unwilling engineering student, I began to call it cultural entropy. An entire region had fallen into a pattern of destructive behavior, just as all the water in a soon to be boiling pot reaches the same temperature no matter where the flame touches the pot. The only way to avoid the heat was to somehow leave the pot, and in fact the brain drain of successful professionals from Lebanon, particularly among its Christian population, was palpable. But for those who stayed, this was simply the reality of the Middle East. Unexplainable violence was the norm.

And so all of that shooting was just another random afternoon in Beirut. As one Marine succinctly put it, "It never pays to get involved in a five-sided argument."

Another Marine was even more precise. The Beirut air was constantly filled with dust, so heavy that the Marines had largely stopped smoking cigarettes. The horizon was filled with destruction in a city that had not too long before been viewed as one of the crown jewels of the Middle East.

"Sir," he said, "It's time for us to get out of here. This is the armpit of the world."

All right, I'll be honest. He didn't say "armpit."

Journalism has its flaws, particularly when one comes into a situation with a preconceived political bias. But good journalism, coming from honest, perceptive journalists, has a far better track record with respect to the challenges in the Middle East than do the policies of our political leaders. Sometimes it is easier to comprehend harsh realities when one is able to observe them closely without direct involvement and without having to feel accountable for their end results. And sometimes politicians are so blinded by their policy positions and by the filtering process through which they

receive their information that they will never fully understand the realities of the problems they are trying to fix.

In any event, I came away from this experience with a strong feeling that the United States should tread softly in the Middle East, that it should never give up its military or diplomatic maneuverability by occupying territory in a region so fraught with multilayered conflicts.

As it was in Beirut, so is it in the Persian Gulf. By 1987, the Iran-Iraq War had dragged on for years, a furious bloodletting that Cap Weinberger once dismissed as "a war between the worst regime in the world and the second-worst regime in the world—and you can take your pick as to which is which." But with major allies in the Sunni Arab world—including Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Bahrain,

and Egypt—concern grew regarding the prospects of an ever more powerful theocratic and fundamentalist Iran. Not unlike what one hears in some defense circles today, a movement took hold to develop a "pan-Arab" strategy that might over time seal off and contain Iranian expansionist desires. Unfortunately, as part of this strategic shift, the Reagan administration abandoned American neutrality and tilted toward Iraq.

I have my own theories, but the actual diplomatic journey toward this overt tilt is still historically unclear. Suffice it to say that in February 1987, the Reagan administration announced a policy whereby Kuwaiti oil tankers would be "reflagged" as American vessels, technically making them American commercial ships under the edicts of international law. This diplomatic fig leaf then obligated the United States Navy to protect the Kuwaiti oil tankers from Iranian attacks as they navigated inside the Persian Gulf and passed through the Iranian-dominated Strait of Hormuz, a vital choke point that led to the open waters of the Arabian Sea.

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This was a deliberate and direct provocation of Iran. It was my view then, and it remains my view today, that certain elements in the Reagan administration decided on this policy as a counterpoint to the revelations of the Iran-Contra debacle, in which a renegade element in the White House had, for a complicated set of reasons, provided weapons to Iran. Since our formal policy was to isolate the fundamentalist regime

that had taken power in 1979, something needed to be done to convince Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and other friendly regimes that despite these shipments we had not secretly tilted toward Iran. Thus began a cavalcade of counterintuitive but nonetheless connected events that resulted, finally, in the strategic paralysis of the United States military trapped inside the unending tribal warfare of Iraq. Is the Middle East byzantine? Is it unpredictable, filled with diplomatic U-turns and clever, vicious ethnic ambushes? Does it make sense for the United States to have directly injected itself into the daily workings of a region where violence is the very emblem of its history and where political loyalties shift like the powdered sand?

Well, yes, yes, and no.

Most Americans remember that Iraq attempted to annex Kuwait in the summer of 1990, which led to our involvement in the first Gulf War. What many forget is that during the Iran-Iraq War, the government of Kuwait was the strongest supporter of Iraq and that it also happened to be the major friend of the Soviet Union in that region. By reflagging the Kuwaiti tankers and calling them our own, the American government not only provoked Iran but overtly tilted toward Iraq. This caused Iran to respond by escalating its rhetoric and intensifying its efforts to interfere with Kuwaiti shipping. In May 1987, as these efforts were gaining steam, an Iraqi air-

minesweepers, CIA helicopters on covert “black” missions, and barges sitting in the middle of the Gulf, to be used as platforms to counteract Iranian Boghaminer patrol boats.

From a classical strategic perspective, this new policy made absolutely no sense at all. As secretary of the Navy, I found myself near enough to observe the circus but because of the legal and traditional restrictions of my job too far removed to affect the operational environment. Finally, on Aug. 7, 1987, I wrote a memorandum to Secretary Weinberger laying out my concerns with this approach, consistent with the strategic theories I had advocated in the past and complemented by the on-the-

Second, it is difficult for many of our military leaders to see how we can evince a “clear intention of winning” when the nature of our commitment has afforded us no measurement of what it would take to “win.” It is dramatically clear that we have offered up a myriad of ways to lose in this endeavor: any time a tanker is hit, any time we fail to be fully successful against an attack on one of our warships, any time a bomb goes off in an airport or a government official is assassinated, we will be perceived as having lost. There is no definitive action that will be accepted as evidence we have won, or when our commitment will be viewed as having been successfully completed. ...

BY **REFLAGGING THE KUWAITI TANKERS** AND CALLING THEM OUR OWN, THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT HAD NOT ONLY **PROVOKED IRAN** BUT OVERTLY **TILTED TOWARD IRAQ**. THIS CAUSED IRAN TO RESPOND BY ESCALATING ITS RHETORIC.

craft attacked and severely damaged an American frigate, the USS *Stark*, killing 37 American sailors. Ostensibly, the Iraqi pilot thought that the *Stark* was an Iranian ship. On the other hand, rumor had it that Saddam Hussein rewarded the pilot with a new car when he landed back home in Iraq.

Despite the attack on the *Stark*, and despite the ugliness of both regimes in the Iran-Iraq confrontation, the shift continued. We had chosen sides. Diplomatically, the Iraqis told American officials that they needed better intelligence on American naval operations in order to prevent future miscalculations. A defense official was soon sent to Baghdad to provide the Iraqis with help. Wild ideas started sprouting like toadstools in the Pentagon. This was a war—or, well, something like a war—and everybody wanted to play. The region began filling up with Special Forces units,

ground realities I had experienced while in Beirut. The memorandum reflected my decision to go on the record regarding the dangers of picking sides in a no-win region, with ramifications for the policies that later resulted in the invasion of Iraq.

In part, I wrote:

Freedom of navigation in the Persian Gulf is beyond doubt a vital national interest. But it is not clear why it became vital to our national interest to re-flag Kuwaiti tankers, thus forcing a freedom of navigation issue that had not existed beforehand. ... In fact, as we learned in Beirut, it could be argued that it was actually against our national interest to become directly involved in a many-sided argument that has been going on for a couple thousand years.

We have not to this point clearly defined our political and military objectives ... and as a result we have no way of structuring our missions so that we can claim our military forces have accomplished these objectives. The issue is made more difficult by the political volatility of the region, and by our having lost the tactical initiative when we agreed to re-flag and escort Kuwaiti tankers. ...

The optimum scenario would be a multinational naval force of reduced size, dedicated to a mission of preserving international waterways for commercial use and committed to using force to defend against the Iranians or anyone else who resumes attacks on shipping. This of course means the Iraqis as well, who as you recall have gained the most in this endeavor. ... Our commitment is to the free transit of all ships ... and not simply to tilt toward the Iraqis. If our desire had been an Iraqi tilt we should not be doing this at all.

But directly involved we now were, and thus began a mind-boggling roller-coaster ride that has yet to end. I left the Pentagon in February 1988, as the squabbles in the Persian Gulf continued. By that summer, the USS *Vincennes*, from some accounts operating in violation of international law inside Iranian waters and perhaps attempting to draw the Iranian military into a fight, accidentally shot down a commercial Iranian Airbus, killing hundreds of Iranian civilians.

True to the seesaw traditions of the region, by the summer of 1990, Saddam Hussein had invaded Kuwait, announcing his intention to annex his former ally. The United States made yet another return to the region, this time readying to fight the same country that it had tilted toward three years earlier. I initially supported President George H.W. Bush's decision to send troops into the region in order to stand down the Iraqis, but I did so with different premises and a different logic from those who were pushing for an immediate war. This was the third time since 1961 that Iraq had moved on Kuwait. One of those moves had been defused diplomatically by the British, the other by the Soviet Union, a friend of both countries. With the right form of diplomacy it seemed predictable that, as with the other two ventures, a deal would be cut between the two countries and Iraq would soon withdraw.

Instead, the diplomatic rhetoric escalated on a daily basis. Kuwait was heavily invested in the British economy, making their government nervous about the instability the invasion had created. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher showed up in Washington, urging President Bush to be firm, as she had been during the Falklands Islands crisis eight years earlier. Bush, criticized for years as a nonassertive aristocrat, drew his now famous "line in the

There is considerable buzz in the intelligence community about the Senate Intelligence Committee "phase 2" report on Iraq released June 5. The mainstream media has focused on the Bush administration taking liberties with the truth to support the march to war. But insiders are more intrigued by whether the neocons were themselves duped, not only by the Iraqi National Congress's Ahmad Chalabi but also by a sometimes comical sting operation of the Iranian government. The oil industry and Israeli interests are often cited as being instrumental in the decision to invade Iraq. Often ignored is the fact that Iran also wanted to see a threatening Saddam Hussein overthrown and replaced by a friendly Shi'ite regime.

The Senate report stated that Pentagon officials obtained fabricated intelligence on Iraq and Iran from several Iranian exiles who could have "been used as agents of a foreign intelligence service ... to reach into and influence the highest levels of the US government." The names of the Iranians redacted from the report are apparently known to the committee's investigators. At least two of them were introduced to American Enterprise Institute scholar Michael Ledeen by Manucher Ghorbanifar, an exiled Iranian arms dealer whom the CIA in 1984 labeled a "fabricator." The revelation suggests that Iran may have manipulated Ledeen, Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Feith and his Office of Special Plans compatriots, and several like-minded officials in Vice President Dick Cheney's office by feeding them bogus intelligence on Iraq. One of the Iranians Ghorbanifar introduced to Ledeen and Pentagon Iran experts Harold Rhode and Larry Franklin in Rome in 2001 was described as a Revolutionary Guard defector, but both he and his colleague, an Iranian living in Morocco, were almost certainly double agents working for Iran. Ghorbanifar, who wanted the U.S. to invade Iraq, was probably a party to the deception.

Ghorbanifar and his "defectors" established their credibility by providing phony information on Iran as well as Iraq. They outlined on a napkin a proposal requiring \$5 million seed money to bring down the Iranian government by creating a huge vehicle jam around Tehran through "the simultaneous disruption of traffic at key intersections." Similar to Chalabi in the lead-up to Iraq, they also invented hit teams targeting U.S. troops in Afghanistan and described secret tunnel complexes criss-crossing Tehran. In subsequent meetings in 2003, the Iranians described how Saddam's WMD had been secretly moved to Iran. A gullible Ledeen, clearly convinced that the information he was being given was reliable, made sure that it wound up on the desk of his good friend Doug Feith.

The Ghorbanifar meetings were kept secret from CIA, DIA, and the State Department. U.S. ambassador in Rome, Mel Sembler, was allegedly briefed by Ledeen, though judging from the Senate report, he did not inform Washington. Sembler, a supermarket magnate and major Republican fundraiser, is a leading neoconservative who sits on the board of the American Enterprise Institute. He also headed the Scooter Libby Legal Defense Fund and founded Freedom's Watch.

Philip Giraldi, a former CIA Officer, is a fellow at the American Conservative Defense Alliance.

sand” against Saddam Hussein. His ratings immediately skyrocketed, and so did the rhetoric. Saddam Hussein became the new Hitler. A chorus of intellectuals, led by the *Wall Street Journal's* editorial page, began calling for the invasion and occupation of Iraq and the creation of a MacArthur Regency in Baghdad. The war clouds gathered. Those who doubted its logic were accused in some circles of being unpatriotic, even cowards.

The drums beat ever louder, even though the administration was still talking publicly about a possible settlement—in similar fashion to the months leading up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003. But this posturing was a relatively fresh technique in 1990. And in October of

As Congress considered the ramifications of going to war, I testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee, warning of this danger and also warning that a large-scale war against Iraq brought with it the risk of a significantly empowered Iran.

But the nation was caught up in war fever. In many ways, Vietnam had reared its ugly head again, this time as a laughing ghost. Many who had supported the Vietnam War were looking for a war to win. Many who had opposed it were looking for a war to support.

Luckily for the United States, National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft's steady hand fashioned a United Nations resolution that limited our military objectives to driving the Iraqis out

When the final sheet was tallied, we had significantly empowered Iran, which itself had been strategically reaching out to Russia and especially to China. One might claim that perhaps we did have an agenda here, something of a counterstrategy to contain Iran's approaches to Russia and China. But at this point, just after the fall of the old Soviet Union, we did not have a strategic approach to either of these large countries. We were pumping billions of dollars into Russia to encourage the formation of a capitalist democracy. And we were failing to connect the strategic dots on China's aggressive courting of many Muslim countries, including Pakistan, which would gain a nuclear capability due to Chinese assistance.

The worst was yet to come. Wars do indeed have other unintended consequences. In America, the extremists who had called for continuing the war into Iraq and setting up a MacArthur Regency in Baghdad screamed betrayal when we ended our offensive at the Kuwaiti border. Instead of celebrating a low-cost victory that was already affecting the dangerous balance in the region, these voices began a decade-long push for a full invasion of Iraq. And in Saudi Arabia, a young Islamic fundamentalist from a wealthy family returned from having supported the Afghan rebels in their fight against the Soviet occupation and became enraged that American military bases were occupying the “sacred soil” of his homeland.

His name was Osama bin Laden. Thus was formed al-Qaeda. The rest, as they say, is history. ■

*James Webb is a U.S. senator from Virginia. This essay is taken from the book *A Time to Fight* by Jim Webb, Copyright ©2008 by James Webb, published by Broadway Books, a division of Random House, Inc. Reprinted with permission.*

VIETNAM REARED ITS UGLY HEAD, THIS TIME AS A LAUGHING GHOST. MANY WHO HAD SUPPORTED THE VIETNAM WAR WERE LOOKING FOR A WAR TO WIN. MANY WHO HAD OPPOSED IT WERE LOOKING FOR A WAR TO SUPPORT.

that year, four months before the Gulf War actually began, I learned from a source in the Pentagon that we were already building permanent bases in Saudi Arabia—bases that in the years following the Gulf War would be attacked by terrorists.

It finally became clear to me that the rhetoric balanced with the supposed willingness to negotiate an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait was little more than veneer, a way to spin up the public's emotions and prepare the nation for a war the administration had already decided to fight. And in addition to the permanent bases being built in Saudi Arabia, the pressure for taking out Saddam Hussein and occupying Iraq grew louder by the day. My belief that the United States should not be an occupying power in that part of the world had not changed. I began speaking out.

of Kuwait, rather than unleashing a further ground offensive on Baghdad. But in a period of less than four years we had demonstrated how the most powerful nation in the world could consistently tie itself into pretzels when faced with the unending backroom dramas of the Middle East. We had assisted Kuwait, a friend of the Soviet Union and the main ally of Iraq in the ugly no-win Iraq-Iran War, thus tilting toward Iraq and provoking Iran. We had then watched Iraq invade Kuwait, causing us as a consequence to tilt away from Iraq even though we were not in any way seeking to balance our relations with Iran. And finally, we had fought Iraq on the battlefield of its former ally, Kuwait, in the process installing American bases on the ground in the most volatile section of the world.

Obama's Blues

Despite enormous structural advantages for Democrats in fundraising, voter registration, and party identification, national polling and Electoral College projections

continue to show that Barack Obama would eke out only the narrowest of wins over John McCain if the general election were held today. Following a brief blip of increased support after wrapping up the Democratic nomination, Obama's meager three- to four-point lead in both the Gallup and Rasmussen tracking polls has returned. Obama consistently runs behind and McCain runs far ahead of their respective parties in the generic presidential polls.

The distribution of Obama's support in the Electoral College gives McCain a chance at victory in November, as the candidate who famously attacked "red" and "blue" political divisions in his 2004 convention speech has become identified completely with the culture of "blue" America in ways that turn his popular antiwar position into a liability.

According to the Electoral College map at RealClearPolitics.com, 110 electoral votes come from states considered toss-ups, but when these states are assigned to the candidates that narrowly lead in recent polling, Obama wins by just 32 electoral votes, 285-253. But that possible Obama victory depends heavily on success in Ohio, where Obama encountered some of the stiffest resistance to his candidacy and where, despite the 2006 electoral devastation of the state Republican Party, McCain has either led or remained within striking distance in most polling. Contrary to the Obama campaign's hope of using its significant fundraising advantage to "scramble" the electoral map, the two parties' coalitions in presidential voting remain impressively stable.

More strikingly, despite the enduring opposition of two-thirds of the public to the war in Iraq and his position as the major party antiwar candidate, Obama so far seems unable to build a coalition larger than those organized around Gore and Kerry in their close defeats. Thanks to the fiction created and maintained by mainstream journalists, McCain has been able to identify himself almost entirely with every major policy of the Bush administration yet retain the public persona of a rebellious and independent-minded reformer. At the same time, on the war itself, the public continues to have greater confidence in McCain than Obama. According to Rasmussen, 49 percent trust McCain more on the war, compared to just 37 percent for Obama. On the signature issue of his campaign and the policy that has done more than any other to destroy the GOP electorally, Obama cannot translate the public's war weariness into support because of this question of trust.

McCain does not seem to be weighed down by his uncompromising defense of one of the worst foreign-policy blunders of the last 40 years. Rather, he is rewarded for having given the same stock answer to every military situation for the last decade: send additional troops. When the air war against Yugoslavia was dragging on, McCain urged President Clinton to prepare to send ground forces; by early 2004, he was demanding an increased presence in Iraq; and again in early 2007, he supported the party line on the surge. Escalation has been McCain's default

response for every engagement since he started running for president in 1999.

By repeating his "more soldiers" mantra at every turn, McCain has somehow won credibility as an expert on national security. He avoids much sustained criticism of the substance of his policy views, or lack thereof, by alluding to his military service and mentioning his hatred of war, both of which sway public emotion more than Obama's cerebral critique of bad strategy. These allusions have combined with fawning media attention to make McCain strangely untouchable on crucial matters of war and peace. Against such manufactured credibility, Obama's actual prescience about the folly of invading Iraq does not have much of a chance of winning over a public skeptical about his very real lack of national-security experience.

Open presidential elections held immediately after or during deeply unpopular wars, such as the 1920 and 1952 elections, have typically been unmitigated disasters for the candidate representing the incumbent party. But as in so many other ways, the 2008 election does not seem to be following established patterns. One of the reasons for the difference is that there has never been an open election in American history held during the fifth year of a foreign war, and there has never been a wartime open election following eight years of the same administration, so the victories by Harding and Eisenhower make for poor precedents. Under these circumstances, McCain's military service, reflexive hawkishness, and unabashed Americanism make for a powerful combination that appeals viscerally to many voters who might otherwise rally to the candidate who represents their views on the war. ■

Arts & Letters

FILM

[*The Happening*]

The Allergy Apocalypse

By Steve Sailer

M. NIGHT SHYAMALAN, an Indian immigrant raised in suburban Philadelphia, is a Crunchy Con *auteur* who makes mild, relatively wholesome high-concept genre flicks. His 1999 ghost story, "The Sixth Sense," was an instant landmark, while his 2002 alien invasion movie, "Signs," was another popular New Age parable about the need for faith and family. His lesser hit in 2004, "The Village," offered an empathetic fable about middle-class flight from urban crime.

Film nerds increasingly despise Shyamalan, though, because his sketchy "Twilight Zone"-style plot devices—such as space invaders who can span the unfathomable void between the stars but have to communicate with each other using crop circles strike these overgrown adolescents as fundamentally childish.

The flimsiness of Shyamalan's conceits is particularly noticeable because his preferred pacing as a director is slow and atmospheric, allowing ample time to anticipate his twists.

In his prime, Shyamalan didn't care what the geeks thought. When the little boy in "Signs" asks what kind of people would work together all over the world to make crop circles, his washed-up jock uncle, played by Joaquin Phoenix, hisses, "Nerds! Nerds who don't have girlfriends."

Unhappily, in his latest film, "The Happening," Shyamalan lets the nerds' nit-picking rattle his once unbreakable ego. "The Happening" is an ecological disaster flick in which New Yorkers in Central Park suddenly start stabbing themselves, and nearby construction workers leap to their deaths.

As the mass suicides spread throughout the Northeast, a Philadelphia biology teacher (Mark Wahlberg), his wife (Zooey Deschanel), and math teacher best friend (John Leguizamo) flee randomly through the ominously verdant hayfields of rural Pennsylvania. After much brow-furrowing, Wahlberg discerns the horrible truth. Polluting humanity is enduring the righteous vengeance of ... plants.

Although his dopey plot is inevitably reminiscent of "Attack of the Killer Tomatoes," Shyamalan has the mood-manipulating skills to pull it off, if only he'd left the vegetable menace unexplained, the way Alfred Hitchcock didn't bother rationalizing the avian assault in "The Birds." After all, Shyamalan's notion of innocent people dying from barely visible wind-borne spores is creepily reminiscent of the still unsolved 2001 anthrax attacks that helped stampede America into the Iraq invasion.

Instead, as he told an interviewer, "When I came up with the idea, I said to the research people... 'I want to know from one to ten whether this idea is totally, totally possible, probably, or completely impossible.' They came back with a stack of information about how the environment works and the plants work..."

Uh-oh.

To out-nerd the nerds, Shyamalan injects jargon like "neurotransmitters" into his slabs of expository dialogue, raising the quantity but not the quality of his story's logic.

Worse, the film's camera and acting styles are intentionally disconcerting. The director frames his actors dead center, shooting them with wide-angle lenses that make their eyes bug out. (A more highbrow director would have critics concocting theories about Brechtian audience alienation.)

The aesthetics of "The Happening" are so unappealing that the entire movie, originally entitled "The Green Effect," might be a covert satire on greenhouse-effect alarmism over global warming. The environmentalists in the film appear demented, and there's little sign of pollution. Pennsylvania looks plenty green.

But can a movie be a satire if it's not funny?

More plausibly, "The Happening" could be an allergy allegory. Every year in the greener parts of America, plants do afflict millions, making them feel like life isn't worth living. Shyamalan bubbled, "One of the things that I guess was in the back of my mind was that one in six emergency room cases for the United States is asthma-related. I'm going, 'What? ... Everybody's like wheezing and there's a line outside the nurse's office for an inhaler. What's that about? We're becoming allergic to what?'"

Perhaps that's why Shyamalan has his normally likeable stars act as if their heads are stuffed up and they're just not in the mood to deal with the end of the world. With the state their sinuses are in, the apocalypse leaves them irked and ineffectual. Maybe they could cope if Armageddon were postponed until the pollen count dropped.

Shyamalan, who is still only 37, should direct better scripts and reserve his own storylines for a half-hour TV series that he could host in the manner of Rod Serling. ■

Rated R for violent and disturbing images.

BOOKS

[*Marching Toward Hell: America and Islam After Iraq*, Michael Scheuer, Free Press, 384 pages]

The Man Who Knew Bin Laden

By Jeffrey Hart

A BIZARRE, much discussed event took place during the May 2007 South Carolina debate among Republican contenders for the presidency. Congressman Ron Paul asserted that the motivation for the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington had been our foreign policy: "Have you ever read the reasons why they attacked us? They attacked us because we've been over there ..." Rudy Giuliani answered as if amazed: "That is an extraordinary statement. ... I don't think I have heard that before, and I have heard some pretty absurd explanations for September 11."

After the debate, Paul, accompanied by foreign-policy expert Michael Scheuer, held a press conference in which he sardonically offered Giuliani "a reading list" that included Scheuer's book *Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror*.

Giuliani was then a major contender for the presidency, while Paul was given no chance at all. Most Americans watching the exchange would probably have agreed with Giuliani, who was wrong, and considered Ron Paul absurd, when he was right. I would also guess that most of the audience was as ignorant as Giuliani in thinking that bin Laden attacked us because we are a democracy, because our women have rights, or because we aren't Muslims. Such ignorance may be universal.

Michael Scheuer is an essential educator. Indeed, no one can read Scheuer and doubt that he knows what he is talking about. He is a CIA veteran who headed the bin Laden unit. According to

SourceWatch, a project of the Center for Media and Democracy, "One of the reasons for [Scheuer's] leaving [the agency] was that Porter Goss, the G.W. Bush appointee who replaced George J. Tenet as CIA director, sent out a memo just after the November 2004 elections stating that the CIA's job is to support the president, which caused consternation within the agency."

As an aside, I have had a similar experience of the Bush administration's recoil from professional competence. In 2005, I received a phone call from the White House personnel office. Would I be interested in serving on the National Council on the Arts? Yes. What are my qualifications? Well, I served two six-year terms on the National Council on the Humanities—appointed first by Nixon, then by Reagan—the only person in the history of the National Endowment for the Humanities to have done so. Also, I have written widely on art as well as literature. I have been a professor of English at Columbia and at Dartmouth. Very good, said the phone. And you don't have to answer this, and it really doesn't matter, but do you support the president? I answered yes, "I support the president the way the rope supports the hanged man." I never heard from the White House again.

Scheuer's expertise is on full display in his writing. His well-documented and often convincing argument is that Osama bin Laden's motivation for a "defensive jihad" against the United States arises from the following sources:

- American troops on the Arabian Peninsula, with its sacred cities of Mecca, where Mohammed was born, and Medina, where he established the first Muslim state.
- American support for corrupt tyrannies, as in Saudi Arabia and Egypt.
- American theft of Arab oil, which is to say, buying it at lower cost than is justifiable.
- Israeli occupation of Palestine, including Jerusalem, and unqualified U.S. support for Israel.
- The American invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, with the consequent slaughter of thousands of Muslims. (Iraq is considered sacred territory because it was the site of the Caliphate for half a millennium.)
- Aggression against Muslims worldwide, as in Somalia, Timor, the Philippines. (These last two can hardly be blamed on the United States.)
- Cultural aggression by the West through television, the Internet, and other means of mass communication.

Bin Laden said much of this in his 1996 fatwa, the "Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places," a document that many security analysts seem happy to ignore. Scheuer appreciates that we cannot accede to all bin Laden's demands, but he asks us to understand our Islamist enemy and recognize what the defense of the United States requires.

Marching Toward Hell is Scheuer's third book on the struggle with jihadist Islam. *Through Our Enemies' Eyes*, his first, appeared in 2002, followed two years later by *Imperial Hubris*. The author of both titles initially remained anonymous. With *Marching Toward Hell*, Scheuer has come in from the cold.

Richard Clarke reviewed *Imperial Hubris* in the *Washington Post* under the title "Finally, the CIA Gets It Right." Clarke, the former national co-ordinator for security and counter-terrorism under presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush and author of *Against All Enemies*, described *Imperial Hubris* as "an important contribution to a necessary debate." Clarke praised the CIA for permitting its publication and admired the author's "considerable courage and insight." He understood that Anonymous was an expert but hoped that he was wrong in "predicting that another attack, more powerful than Sept. 11 and perhaps involving weapons of mass destruction, is all but inevitable."

Through Our Enemies' Eyes originated as a manual for new counterterrorist agents concentrating on bin Laden and jihadist Sunnis. The CIA decision to permit Scheuer's first two books to be published gave rise to the assumption that the agency tacitly supported the books' scathing criticism of the Clinton administration's failure to appreciate the seriousness of the lethal danger we face from al-Qaeda. War, after all, was declared on the U.S. as early as 1996, and al-Qaeda had already proved the seriousness of its hostility with a number of attacks aimed at Americans, including, of course, the failed attempt to blow up the World Trade Center in 1993.

In *Marching Toward Hell*, we learn more about Clinton's failure to strike at al-Qaeda between 1996 and 2001. In December 1998, for example, the U.S. government was given solid intelligence about a house in Kandahar where bin Laden was staying, but vetoed an air strike because the building was near a mosque. In this latest book, the reader sees how Scheuer's analysis has been energized by his growing horror at what we face.

Indeed, some have judged Scheuer's rhetoric here to be excessive. Yet if he is right, his anger is surely justified.

Scheuer expands on his previous work and brings it up to date. His assessment can be easily summarized. We cannot win in Afghanistan or in Iraq, and we will be bled to death militarily and economically if we stay. Neither the British nor the Soviets could consolidate Afghanistan. (He might have added Tamburlaine the Great, who had to bribe his way through the Khyber Pass.) We

Scheuer's stance on Israel is also questionable. He argues that the U.S. doesn't have any strategic or moral commitment to Israel and that if Israel disappeared tomorrow it shouldn't concern Americans. The U.S. government, therefore, is not obliged to broker an Israel-Palestine agreement. In that context, he asserts, America's unnecessary support for Israel causes fierce anti-Americanism among Muslims and leads to acts of terrorism. If that support ends, attitudes to America will change.

HIS ASSESSMENT CAN BE EASILY SUMMARIZED. **WE CANNOT WIN IN AFGHANISTAN OR IN IRAQ, AND WE WILL BE BLED TO DEATH MILITARILY AND ECONOMICALLY IF WE STAY.**

cannot stabilize the situation there or in Iraq. Occupation of both these nations infuriates Muslims. Our enemy is al-Qaeda, and we should smash it wherever we find it and, in destroying terrorists, cause enough collateral damage to ensure that host nations will be reluctant to offer future sanctuary to al-Qaeda. We should have already killed bin Laden.

On one important point Scheuer is surely wrong: WMD. He maintains that it is unfair to accuse the Bush administration of lying about Saddam's WMD in 2003 since "most of the world's countries" believed that Saddam had them. What? German intelligence had established that our important informant Rafid Ahmed Alwan, known to the CIA as "Curveball," was an unreliable source, even a mental case. The notorious "Downing Street Memo" from the head of British intelligence to Tony Blair said that "intelligence and facts were being shaped around policy"—the policy being the invasion of Iraq. That sounds like lying. There was no "uranium from Africa," as Bush said in his 2003 State of the Union address even though the CIA had already cast doubt on the claim. The final minority report of the House Judiciary Committee on Iraq nails innumerable lies about WMD.

But America need not—indeed should not—ignore the legitimacy of Israel in order to avoid the violent wrath of Islamic extremists. Rather, we could use our role as Israel's protector to negotiate for a peace that would not antagonize Arab sentiments. We could, for example, guarantee Israel's security on the condition that Israel turn over the West Bank to Fatah and the Palestinian Authority as the basis for a two state-solution. Israel cannot forever rule an Arab population on the West Bank. Let Hamas rot in Gaza. Muslim realists might accept that, which would limit the appeal of al-Qaeda's attitude toward U.S. support for Israel.

In addition, *Marching Toward Hell* is verbose, badly organized, and would have benefited immensely from rigorous editing. The book could have been cut by at least a quarter. We hear rather too much about "policy elites" who lack moral courage—surely not all lack it—and the international do-good agencies inhibiting our actions. Scheuer remains, however, an indispensable source of information about our war with jihadist Islam, and all his books should be widely read. ■

Jeffrey Hart is a senior editor of National Review and author, most recently, of The Making of the American Conservative Mind.

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[*Beyond the Hoax: Science, Philosophy and Culture*, Alan Sokal, Oxford University Press, 465 pages]

Transgressing Against the Postmodernists

By Damian Thompson

ONE OF THE PARADOXES of postmodernism is its lack of a sense of humor. Scholars who conceive of intellectual activity as a game, and who delight in exposing its rhetorical and procedural tricks, react like outraged dowagers when someone plays a trick on them. That is one reason Alan Sokal, a professor of physics at New York University and professor of mathematics at University College London, is so despised by the deconstructionist Left.

In 1996, he published an article, "Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity," in the peer-reviewed cultural-studies journal *Social Text*. Its declared aim was to use the emerging theory of quantum gravity to show that science itself contradicted the "dogma" that the operation of eternal physical laws can be measured by "objective" procedures and "the (so-called) scientific method." There followed a paper written in fluent Lacanian jargon studied with references to nonlinearity, morphogenetic fields, and differential topology. That, in itself, was not new: the philosophical deconstruction of science was the great postmodern project of the late 1980s and early 1990s. What thrilled readers of *Social Text* was the fact that a leading professional physicist, as opposed to a philosopher, sociologist, or literary theorist, was attempting this exercise from inside the scientific establishment.

Another of the paradoxes of postmodernism is that although many of its practitioners make their careers exposing the

meaninglessness of intellectual hierarchies, they roll over in delight the moment someone high up the hierarchy wants to tickle their stomachs. In this respect they resemble other apostles of what I call counterknowledge—the fast-morphing, overlapping, ever-growing corpus of "alternative" knowledge that abandons traditional methodology in response to the demands of intellectual fashion and the marketplace. Homeopaths, 9/11 conspiracy theorists, and cult archaeologists sneer at academia until a maverick professor endorses their theories, after which they never stop boasting about his or her credentials. So Sokal was—briefly—a hero in cultural studies circles, for transgressing the boundary from his side of the border.

A few weeks later, he had become a bogeyman in those same circles—and he remains one now, more than a decade later. Soon after *Social Text* appeared, Sokal published an article in the now defunct magazine *Lingua Franca* revealing that the whole thing had been a hoax. "Transgressing the Boundaries" was a parody that had been accepted by a leading academic journal whose editors—to Sokal's delight—had not spotted even one of its carefully planted scientific howlers. In his own words, the essay was "a mélange of truths, half-truths, quarter-truths, falsehoods, non-sequiturs, and syntactically correct sentences that have no meaning whatsoever" containing speculative theories passed off as science, absurd analogies, and confusion between the technical and everyday senses of English words.

Why did Sokal go to such trouble? Not to defend scientists: as he put it,

"we'll survive just fine, thanks," despite the withering discourse of feminist scholars. Students, on the other hand, do need to be defended, and to defend themselves, against lit-crit verbiage masquerading as physics; the hoax was partly intended to help them develop an informed skepticism with which to deconstruct their professors' deconstructionism. But—and this is what really stung—at the heart of Sokal's exercise lay his own political agenda. And it was a leftist one. If "Transgressing the Boundaries" had been a parody, however exquisitely crafted, by a conservative professor, it would have been easier to dismiss. The author, however, describes himself "an unabashed Old Leftist who never quite understood how deconstruction was supposed to help the working class."

In his view, epistemological agnosticism of the *Social Text* variety is the enemy of progress because it destroys our ability to make moral and political judgments as well as scientific and commonsense observations. "Deny that context-dependent assertions can be true," he writes, "and you don't just throw out quantum mechanics and molecular biology: you also throw out the Nazi gas chambers, the American enslavement of Africans, and the fact that today in New York it's raining."

This, more or less, is happening. Consumers of counterknowledge tend to be gullible across the board. Some—not many, but enough—postmodernists have flirted with Holocaust denial; and Holocaust deniers, like their Nazi precursors, are often avid consumers of alternative medicine, many of whose claims are these days based on bizarre misrepresentations of quantum theory.

Daniel Larison

www.amconmag.com/larison

EUNOMIA
n. the principle of good order

"Beyond sheer knowledge, Larison possesses an old man's wisdom rare in someone young enough to have that much energy."

Steve Sailer, isteve.blogspot.com

Sokal recognizes that the challenge to the methodology of the Enlightenment has gathered pace since 1996. His new book, *Beyond The Hoax*, consists mostly of previously published material, but is nonetheless valuable since the general reader is likely to be encountering it for the first time. One chapter that is new, however, is the author's very detailed annotation of the original parody, in which he explains exactly how he twisted theory, data, and language in order to smuggle a farrago of nonsense into a hitherto distinguished journal. He begins with the title. "Current practice in the academic humanities dictates that titles must begin with a gerund, consist of two phrases separated by a colon, and contain at least one play on words," he writes. Hence "Transgressing the Boundaries," which in addition to a gerund offers the double meaning of crossing disciplinary borders—"cultural-studies folks love transgression and interdisciplinarity," explains Sokal—and alludes to the technical issue of boundary conditions in quantum gravity. And all before the colon.

THE MORE SOPHISTICATED **PSEUDOSCIENTISTS** HAVE TAKEN TO FALLING BACK ON **POSTMODERN ARGUMENTS** WHEN THE **CREDIBILITY** OF THEIR EVIDENCE IS CHALLENGED.

The new annotations do not just reveal a dazzling repertoire of teases, they also expose the extent of the scientific ignorance displayed by Lyotard, Lacan, *et al.* in the course of their showing off. In the parody, Sokal pretended to endorse modish assertions that the limitations of linear mathematics confirmed the redundancy of the linear thought patterns of the Enlightenment. In his new annotations, he points out that the word "linear" has two unrelated meanings in mathematics; postmodern theorists often confused them, with the result that their quasi-scientific justifications for their own "nonlinear thought" were nothing more than pretentious word-spinning.

But the famous parody was written in 1996, and linear time has since carried off several of the postmodern pioneers. Having explained what he did and why he did it, Sokal needs to move the story on to take account of the follies of the 21st century. This he does in a chapter entitled "Pseudoscience and Postmodernism: Antagonists or Fellow Travellers?" which first appeared in a book of essays about pseudoarchaeology published in 2006. He makes two crucial observations: that the more sophisticated pseudoscientists have taken to falling back on postmodern arguments when the credibility of their evidence is challenged and that some postmodernists display a strong interest in—and influence on—pseudoscience. Sokal discusses, for example, postmodern nursing theory. (Yes, there is such a thing.) He quotes Janice L. Thompson, a postmodern medical writer, on the desirability of "developing truth claims outside the discourses of science. ... As a non-discursive practice, therapeutic touch, like shamanic healing, may elude our current epistemic 'paradigms.' Precisely

for this reason, we should be careful about how and why we judge it." Thompson, incidentally, is a highly trained nurse who seeks to influence medical practice; at least no one allowed French literary theorists to carry out "transgressive" experiments in a physics laboratory.

In his last chapter, Sokal moves from pseudoscience to religion, and this is where the problems begin. He is an uncompromising atheist who rejects the notion that the claims of faith are confined to the realm of an untestable transcendent: all religions make purportedly factual assertions, though some make fewer dubious assumptions than others. This is true enough; but, like Sam Harris

in *The End of Faith* (which he discusses at length), Sokal also makes polemical and unsatisfactory generalizations about religion. "The bottom line is that *all* religions, not just Islam, are potentially dangerous—and they are dangerous precisely to the extent that their adherents take their sacred scriptures seriously, for the simple reason that reliance on revelation rather than evidence undermines the possibility of rational discussion," he writes. Really? But how can you establish a precise correlation when you have not begun to define religion, or scripture, or taking scripture seriously, or revelation, or rational discussion? Any argument against "religion," however boastfully delivered, is fatally weakened if the author does not explain what he means by the word: Christopher Hitchens does not even attempt to do so in *God Is Not Great*, which is why it is such a disappointing polemic.

Later in the chapter, however, Sokal does concede that "moral values" might be written into our DNA in some mysterious way and then goes on to imply that immorality in the modern age finds its clearest expression in the operation of free-market capitalism and the policies of the Bush administration. These points are not developed and—together with a strong whiff of Old Left self-righteousness—create a sense of messy improvisation that makes one wish that Sokal had stuck to his original target. When he writes about the misappropriation of scientific language by literary intellectuals he does so with a clarity and wit that have earned him his own place in the intellectual pantheon. "Transgressing the Boundaries" is a minor comic masterpiece. But, like so many boundary-transgressing scientists, when he ventures into the areas of religion and politics he displays a naïveté that positively invites parody. ■

Damian Thompson is editor-in-chief of London's Catholic Herald and author of Counterknowledge: How We Surrendered to Conspiracy Theories, Quack Medicine, Bogus Science and Fake History.

[*Democracy's Prisoner: Eugene Debs, the Great War, and the Right to Dissent*, Ernest Freeberg, Harvard University Press, 380 pages]

The Conscience of a Socialist

By Clark Stooksbury

EUGENE VICTOR DEBS was a socialist icon, a pioneer of 20th-century labor unionism, a five-time presidential candidate, and a firebrand who went to prison for publicly denouncing America's intervention in the First World War. In 1920, he won almost a million votes running his White House campaign from behind bars. His story is a timely reminder of the limits of a democratic society and should interest today's antiwar Americans, both on the Left and Right.

Author Ernest Freeberg describes Debs as a radical "in an American grain." His "fight against capitalism was inspired as much by Tom Paine, Walt Whitman, and Wendell Phillips as it was by Karl Marx." He was also a man of contrasts: an all-American Marxist and a self-described "citizen of the world" who was devoted to his hometown of Terre Haute, Indiana. His socialism coexisted with the unfettered capitalism of early 20th-century America.

Debs and other socialists considered World War I to be a fight among capitalists. In 1915, in the radical publication *Appeal to Reason*, he wrote that to be a soldier was to be a "hired assassin of his capitalist master." The U.S. was then officially at peace. By 1917, when the country went to war, Woodrow Wilson was determined to build support through propaganda and even censorship. That year, his administration introduced the Espionage Act. Congress removed a provision in the original bill that would have given an executive-branch committee the power to censor newspapers, but left in clauses allowing the postmaster general to refuse mailing

privileges to publications he considered "treasonous" or guilty of "insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny or refusal of duty in the military ... or willfully obstruct[ing] the recruitment or enlistment services of the United States." In the spring of 1918, Congress added the Sedition Act, which punished "disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language" that might encourage "contempt scorn, contumely or disrepute" toward the Constitution, government, or military.

This broad language gave the government great power to gag its opponents. Freeberg documents some of the numerous assaults on civil liberties: "An Iowa man received twenty years for predicting that American boys would leave for Europe as heroes but return to fill the insane asylums. Others went to jail for distributing a pamphlet that a federal prosecutor thought 'overstated the horrors of war.' ... A Montana man was prosecuted when he called the president 'a Wall Street tool' during a 'hot and furious saloon argument.'"

In this atmosphere, Debs's loud dissent was an invitation to arrest, but he declined to be quiet. In a fateful speech in Canton, Ohio, he declaimed, "they have always taught you that it is your patriotic duty to go to war and have yourselves slaughtered at command. But in all of that history of the world, you the people, never had a voice in declaring war ... the working class who fights the battles, the working class who make the sacrifices, the working class who shed the blood, the working class who furnish the corpses, the working class have never yet had a voice in declaring war."

Clyde Miller, a *Cleveland Plain Dealer* reporter, was so outraged by these words that he campaigned, both through his publication and by directly lobbying a federal prosecutor, to have Debs punished. Amid public acrimony, Debs was tried in Cleveland and given a ten-year sentence, which was later upheld in the Supreme Court. Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., who would later reverse his stance on free speech with his famous "clear and present danger" test, wrote the majority opinion.

Democracy's Prisoner covers the trial in detail, but the second, and perhaps more important, part of the book is about Debs's time in prison and the campaign to release him and other political prisoners of the Wilson years. It was a struggle that continued into the 1920s, through three presidencies and amid an evolving public mood.

Freeberg's depiction of Wilson is unflattering. He writes, "for a man determined to impose his ideals on a wartorn world, Wilson showed remarkable deference to his postmaster." After the war, Wilson refused to grant pardons to political prisoners in spite of lobbying from the likes of Sinclair Lewis and Upton Sinclair. He also repeatedly deferred to his infamous attorney general, A. Mitchell Palmer. When Wilson cabled from France that he was considering pardons for free-speech prisoners, Palmer convinced him to wait until they could discuss the matter in person. The attorney general persuaded Wilson that amnesty was a bad idea and that it was the wrong time to release Debs.

"For Palmer," writes Freeberg, "the Debs case posed a unique challenge. He had no doubt that Debs deserved to be in prison ... Palmer conceded that his ten-year sentence was excessive and should be commuted at the appropriate time. But in the summer of 1919 he believed that freeing Debs would be a terrible political mistake, one that would only give comfort to Wilson's enemies..." As Wilson's term ended, however, even Palmer publicly supported clemency for Debs, but the

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president still refused. Wilson was not in a generous mood, having “spent his last months in office stewing over grudges, petty and great, against those he perceived as his political foes.” Debs, meanwhile, said that he preferred to remain in prison while Wilson was still in office and that it was the latter who was in need of a pardon: “No man in public life in American History ever retired so thoroughly discredited, so scathingly rebuked, so overwhelmingly impeached and repudiated as Woodrow Wilson.”

Behind bars, first at the state penitentiary in Moundsville, West Virginia—the feds were overcrowded—and later at the federal prison in Atlanta, Georgia, Debs became a model prisoner. Because of his celebrity status, Debs managed to develop special relationships with prison officials and garner privileges such as a tour of Atlanta with the warden and Lucy Robins, a visiting radical working for his release. His unique status was highlighted in 1920 when the Socialists nominated Debs as their presidential candidate for the fifth time. The Wilson White House relaxed prison rules to allow Debs to release a statement once a week to the press. “Where Debs had once stormed the country in a verbal torrent,” Freeberg relates, “he would now have five hundred words a week, forwarded to his brother and then distributed through the wire services.”

In addition to being a presidential candidate, Debs was himself a subject of debate in the build up to the election. The eventual victor, Warren G. Harding, had the Debs issue “thrust upon him” whenever he left the safety of his front-porch campaign. Harding was reluctant to promise freedom for political prisoners, whom he considered dangerous, although he had stated that “too much has been said about Bolshevism in America.” He ordered a review when he took office, and his attorney general, Harry Daugherty, summoned Debs to Washington to discuss the matter. Daugherty disapproved of Debs’s insistence that his First Amendment rights

had been violated, but recommended that he be released out of “mercy rather than justice.” Harding ignored the request that he wait until after New Year’s Day 1922 to commute his sentence in order to “preserve the sanctity of Christmas.”

Reporters flocked to the prison in Atlanta before Christmas 1921, anticipating the release of Debs. Freeberg sets the poignant scene as Debs walked to freedom with his new suit and a \$5 bill:

Halfway to the street, Debs was stopped in his tracks by a roaring tribute from his fellow inmates. ... Most of the two thousand convicts cheered, hollered, and called his name. Debs turned to face them, and for half a minute he held his hat aloft as their applause grew louder. Finally overcome, he bowed his head and wept. This was, he later wrote, ‘the most deeply touching and impressive moment and the most profoundly dramatic incident in my life.’

Debs met President Harding at the White House, but was unimpressed by Washington. He told reporters that he preferred “to live privately as a humble citizen in [my] cottage in Terre Haute.”

Debs’s release didn’t entirely resolve matters, but Harding and later Calvin Coolidge released the rest of the political prisoners from Wilson’s war.

The Debs case shows the fragility of free speech during wartime. Sen. William Borah of Idaho, campaigning for release of political prisoners, said, “it seems to me that a vicious doctrine has grown up... that when war comes the constitution is for the time suspended.”

Free speech now enjoys much stronger protection, but a problem persists as much today as in 1918: when the country is gripped with nationalistic passion building up to war, few are willing to listen to the opposition, whether they be Debsian radicals or not. ■

Clark Stooksbury has written for American Enterprise, Chronicles, and Liberty.

Weiss

Continued from page 20

The Jews are quietly leaving the room. Saban described his horror at visiting his son’s college, Wesleyan, and seeing a table on peace in the Middle East at which Israel was demonized. Some of the kids at that table were surely Jews.

Especially now that an alternative lobby, J Street, has formed on its left, AIPAC seems to be making gestures in a more peaceable direction. One was the testimony from Sderot, the Israeli city bordering Gaza that American politicians must learn to pronounce or face political doom. (I think it’s Stay-ROTE.) It was inevitable that someone from the region would take the stage, and it’s impossible to imagine a more appealing spokesperson than Chen Abrahams, a pretty, soft-spoken kibbutz-dweller of about 40. The audience was utterly quiet as she described the terrible price her community has paid for the siege of Gaza. Nothing like the price the Palestinians have paid, I’d note. Still, if this was schmaltz, it was real schmaltz. At the end of her taped appearance, Abrahams said, “My biggest hope is for peace. I believe in talking to them, I don’t believe in wiping them out.” I was stunned.

Then Abrahams came out on stage to a standing ovation, and it struck me that it might be possible to take all the loving energy in this place now directed at helping other Jews and redirect it to great effect. If the AIPAC legions were somehow convinced that Jews will only be safe in the Middle East if the Arabs among them were also safe—without checkpoints, without a siege, with the dignity and freedom that Jews have had in the West—all these arrayed powers might then be directed to a larger idea of family and produce a miracle at last. ■

Philip Weiss is at work on a book about Jewish issues. He blogs at www.philipweiss.org/mondoweiss/.

Flattening Globalism

Sovereignty. What a glorious word. A bit hard to spell perhaps, but worth every letter.

Yes, I know it seems like only yesterday that the world was flat. That was Thomas Friedman's best-selling argument: "Walls" were a thing of the past. Flatness, globalism, the twilight of sovereignty—these were the waves of the future.

Well, maybe Friedman needs to spend more time with the Irish and the Iraqis—and the Americans. In recent days, all three peoples have shown signs that they don't wish to be rolled over by the electronic-bureaucratic herd of universalist sovereignty-stompers.

Let's look at those plucky peoples willing to put a pitchfork into the grand globalists and their vast schemes.

On June 13, the people of Ireland rejected the Treaty of Lisbon, which would have enmeshed Eire even deeper into the coils of the European Union. The Irish were perfectly happy to accept subsidies from the check-writers in Brussels, but proved unwilling to bow down to foreigners. Over the centuries, they've had enough of that.

Ireland's prime minister Brian Cowen, along with the political and business elites of his country, had advocated a "yes" vote on the EU treaty. And his reaction to "no" was revealing: In the spirit of Fabian globalism, he allowed, "In a democracy, the will of the people—as expressed at the ballot box—is sovereign." But then, in the very next breath, Cowen added, "We must not rush to conclusions. The Union has been in this situation before and each time has found an agreed way forward." Ah, yes, "forward"—the inevitable and ineluctable long march to the radiant future.

Such is the power of an idea whose time has come—come to the elites, that is. As the *New York Times* had to admit in the wake of the Irish election, "In general, such treaties are far more popular with Europe's leaders than with its voters." As the Irish just proved. Score one for the don't-tread-on-me pitchforkers.

That same day, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, in the midst of negotiations with Americans over permanent basing rights for Uncle Sam in Mesopotamia, said flatly, "The Iraqis will not consent to an agreement that infringes their sovereignty."

Some say, of course, that al-Maliki is just a puppet for the Americans. But if so, he is becoming an ungrateful puppet. And yes, he was safe inside the Green Zone while GIs built 106 military bases in his country, including one called "Camp Victory." (Bitter jokes about "Mission Accomplished" aside, it's a safe bet that al-Maliki and his countrymen grit their teeth when they hear that name.)

It was another ingrate, Manuel Quezon, the hero of Filipino independence, who declared, "I prefer a country run like hell by Filipinos to a country run like heaven by Americans." Indeed, around the world, those flinty words sum up the attitude of the colonized.

Finally, even Americans showed that they get their backs up when their government pushes them too far. On June 6, liberal U.S. senators, fronting for Al Gore and global greens, could muster only 48 votes—12 short of what they needed, not even a majority—for the Lieberman-Warner "cap and trade" legis-

lation, a bill that would have put the U.S. on the road to Kyoto serfdom.

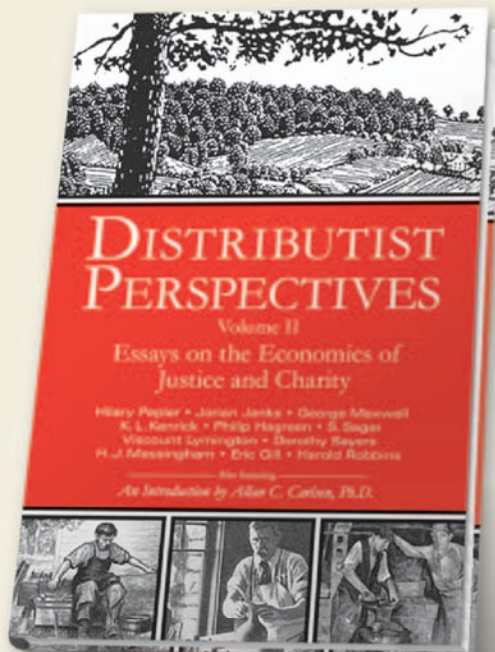
But more collisions are coming. The elites here in the U.S. are determined to elect their man, Barack Obama. (John McCain was their second choice, infinitely preferable to the other Republican candidates.)

So now Democrats are gearing up for their next round of world flattening, beginning in 2009. Ted Widmer, a speechwriter for President Clinton, just published an op-ed in the *Los Angeles Times* calling for "a new and better freedom agenda, grounded in realistic promises of economic betterment." Not only that, Widmer wants us to "bring hope to hundreds of millions of people" by establishing "clear standards for the credibility of elections, creating consequences for leaders who tamper with votes."

Translation: We liberal interventionists will be like George W. Bush, promoting our vision of democracy everywhere, except that we will be more multilateral, more focused on economic aid. And yet one can hear, through all this high-hoping, the insistent voice of Quezon and other anti-imperialists: *Yankee, Go Home!*

Widmer is just one voice, even if he is well placed at Brown University and about to publish a book titled *Ark of the Liberties: America and the World*. Yet whether conservatives like it or not, whether Third Worlders like it or not, the left wing of the world-flattening posse is saddling up, ready to ride on behalf of its version of the "liberty century."

But all across the watchtowers of nationalism and national sovereignty, the backlash has begun. It is gathering force, even fury. ■



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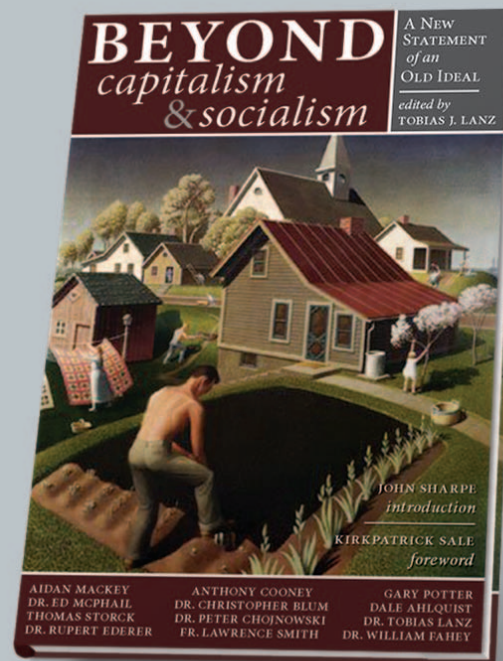
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